Commentary
September 1999

"My Beautiful Old House" and Other Fabrications by Edward Said

Justus Reid Weiner

The Moral Meaning of Genetic Technology
Leon R. Kass

Reds
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In Defense of German Jews
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The Kubrick Mystique
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Books in Review
Irwin M. Stelzer • David G. Roskies • Samuel McCracken
James Nuechterlein • Kay S. Hymowitz

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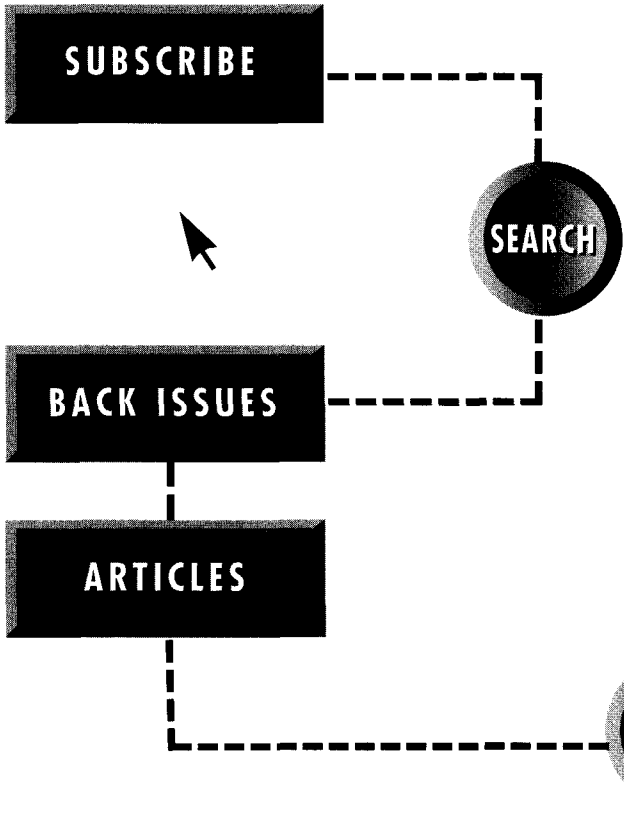

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Commentary

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Commentary
September 1999

Letters from Readers

The Musical Canon

To the Editor:

I read with great interest Terry Teachout's three-part series, "Musical Masterpieces of the Century" [April, May, June], and while I agree that the time of atonality has surely come and gone, what about cacophony? Tonality alone is insufficient in discussing the development of 20th-century music. For example, the Béla Bartók pieces Mr. Teachout recommends are both tonal and cacophonic. When I was a boy, my mother took me to Carnegie Hall to hear the Young People's Concerts, conducted from time to time by Dimitri Mitropoulos. That maestro often pretended to play modernist music when in reality he was doing nothing more than warming up the orchestra. I think that says a lot.

In my opinion, with only one or two exceptions even from Mr. Teachout's own list, I would guess that 200 years from now, the entire period of 20th-century music will have been relegated to the dustbin—it is that painful to listen to.

James Harrison Cohen
New York City

To the Editor:

I found Terry Teachout's "Musical Masterpieces of the Century" enjoyable and interesting, but because he limited himself to dead composers, perhaps it might have been better titled "Musical Masterpieces of the First Half of the Century." Mr. Teachout has chosen only seven works from the second half of the century, and they are pretty much the weakest pieces on his list, a reflection of the fact that most of the great composers of the earlier period were either dead or past their prime by 1950.

No one, of course, can be satisfied with anyone else's list of the best music of any period, but I found most of Mr. Teachout's choices sound and a few of his less expected ones excellent—it was good to see such relatively neglected works as Ralph Vaughan Williams's Symphony No. 5, Manuel de Falla's *Nights in the Gardens of Spain*, and Leoš Janáček's Glagolitic Mass. But a few choices struck me as bizarre: Kurt Weill's *The Seven Deadly Sins* rather than *The Threepenny Opera*; William Walton's bloated though occasionally impressive Symphony No. 1 instead of his lovely Viola Concerto; Olivier Messiaen's endless *Turangalîla-symphonie* rather than his "Quartet for the End of Time"; Samuel Barber's sentimental *Hermit Songs* rather than his Violin Concerto or *Medea* ballet. I cannot imagine what Miklós Rósza is doing in such august company, and I think Mr. Teachout greatly overrates Francis Poulenc and the late work of Dmitri Shostakovich.

Inevitably, the selection is arbitrary in another way. In order to make the list more interesting, Mr. Teachout seems to have decided to limit the best composers to four works. I do not blame him, but it would be easy to find ten or even twenty pieces each by Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel, Igor Stravinsky, Béla Bartók, and perhaps Sergei Prokofiev that are better than any one piece by most of the other composers listed.

More seriously, I am troubled by Mr. Teachout's oversimplification of some of the stylistic and ideological questions of our era. Yes, after 90 or so years, we can say that atonal music has turned out to be much more limited than we had previously thought, but this does not mean that tonality is essential to comprehensibility. The few atonal works Mr. Teachout includes are comprehensible (well, up to a point), and so are such masterpieces as Edgard Varèse's *Octandre*, Anton Webern's *Das Augenlicht* and Variations for Piano, and Arnold Schoen-

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berg's Six Little Piano Pieces, Op. 19.

Mr. Teachout is also off base in lumping together Milton Babbitt and Elliott Carter with John Cage, and all three with Karlheinz Stockhausen and Pierre Boulez. I do not think the music of Babbitt and Carter can in any sense be called "antitonal" rather than atonal or nontonal. Whatever one thinks of their music—and I think each composer has written at least a couple of masterpieces as well as a lot of highly problematic, even bad, work—it is serious and not an "evasion," masking an "inability to renew and refashion the musical tradition [the composers] had inherited," as Mr. Teachout claims. Similarly, whatever one thinks of John Adams, his music is by no means as "simple-minded" as that of Philip Glass and Steve Reich.

I count myself one of the composers Mr. Teachout refers to who have been influenced by such figures as Stravinsky, Shostakovich, Benjamin Britten, and Aaron Copland, but it is still an open question whether this new trend will lead to music of real significance, and it is certainly premature to predict that the new tonalism will become "the prevailing classical-music style of the 21st century."

Finally, I think it is Mr. Teachout's desire to politicize the issues that leads him to call his list a "countercanon." In fact, it is not very different from what most music-lovers would choose. While his choices might not be considered politically correct in the academy, music departments are less influential in the music world than he seems to think, and in any case even they have been changing. Still, Mr. Teachout is to be commended for bringing up important questions and, I am sure, provoking a good deal of discussion among both musicians and nonmusicians.

STEVEN R. GERBER
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

It is inconceivable to me that of Mahler's symphonies only the Ninth made Terry Teachout's masterpiece list. All but Mahler's first two symphonies were performed in the 20th century.

NOAH DANIEL
Brooklyn, New York

TO THE EDITOR:

I could argue with Terry Teachout about some of the works he included in his list of masterpieces, but one exclusion I consider unforgivable: Ernest Bloch's *Schelomo*. It is in my opinion the greatest cello concerto written in the 20th or any other century. My two favorite performances of it are by Zara Nelsova and Leonard Rose.

ELIEZER GREISDORF
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

TO THE EDITOR:

I am a bit surprised that Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana* is not on Terry Teachout's list. Orff is the most tonal of modernists. In fact, harmony is more important than melody in his music.

GEORGE JOCHNOWITZ
Staten Island, New York

TO THE EDITOR:

I much enjoyed Terry Teachout's series, but I wonder why he did not consider Paul Hindemith's *Ludus Tonalis* even worthy of consideration. I have long thought this work one of the great pieces of 20th-century music.

STEPHEN BURANT
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR:

Congratulations to Terry Teachout on some of his selections. I am particularly impressed by his recognition of Miklós Rózsa as the second most important Hungarian composer of the century, after Béla Bartók. I disagree with some of his choices, of course, but everybody will. I have always felt, for example, that the recognition given to Aaron Copland smells a little of political correctness, the American patriotic brand. I have no qualms, however, with Mr. Teachout's selection of George Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*, clearly the best and perhaps the only considerable American opera.

I am more concerned by Mr. Teachout's view that "After Stravinsky, the 20th century's foremost composer was Béla Bartók." For me, it is increasingly hard to deny the preeminence of Shostakovich in the 20th century. Stravinsky was good, and Bartók's second place behind him is well deserved. But Shostakovich was a giant.

ANDREW SANDERS
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

TO THE EDITOR:

Thank you for a great series on modern music. I appreciate the work Terry Teachout did in selecting a series of major works composed in this sorriest of centuries. I will listen to the pieces he chose with much pleasure in the coming months.

I was sad to see, however, that the name of Darius Milhaud does not appear on the list. Not only was he a great composer, but his influence reached far, to the Brazilian composer Heitor Villa-Lobos and, if I am not mistaken, to Gershwin's *Cuban Overture*.

In addition, though I do not endorse serial music, I enjoy Elliott Carter's Quartets. Whether or not they belong on the list, I cannot say. I can say, however, that a couple of Schoenberg pieces do belong there: *Verklärte Nacht* and his opera *Moses und Aron*.

ALAIN LERNER
Arlington, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR:

I have read Terry Teachout's music criticism for years, but the idea of working up a list of masterpieces was an inspiration. It did a real service on a number of levels. I am about as conversant with classical music as a nonspecialist can be, so it was an exceptionally exciting treat to find items on his list that I had not previously discovered. Please accept my thanks for alerting me to Maurice Duruflé, Hindemith's *The Four Temperaments*, Janáček's mass, and Erich Wolfgang Korngold's Symphony in F sharp.

On another level, I am elated by the news Mr. Teachout has brought back from the front—namely, that the dominance of sterile, ugly atonal music is ending. The courageous stance that he has taken from the bully pulpit of COMMENTARY has no doubt hastened this long overdue change in the aesthetic climate.

Finally, however, I must ask why Mr. Teachout did not include on his list Henryk Górecki's Symphony No. 3 and his *Three Pieces in Olden Style*? Or Carl Nielsen's Symphony No. 5? Maybe even some piano pieces by Erik Satie, or

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Samuel Barber's Adagio for Strings?

BRUCE M. GANS
Chicago, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR:

Thank you for Terry Teachout's provocative series. My main reaction was shock that I was unfamiliar—completely unfamiliar—with so many of the pieces he listed. I am going to get Aaron Copland's piano sonata and try again on the fifth Bartók string quartet.

I certainly agree with Mr. Teachout's inclusion of Mahler's works. He and Shostakovich are, I think, the top 20th-century composers. I also agree that the atonalists have ruined many a concert: how often I have gone to hear 20th-century music, hoping to find something melodious and noble from my own era, only to encounter what Mr. Teachout aptly describes as composers' "futile attempts to mask their own inability." When the sound stops, you do not know whether to applaud, be silent, or keep dozing.

The one piece I was surprised not to see is Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem*. This is certainly a "masterpiece of permanent interest" and has continued to illuminate listeners over the years.

GEORGE HAZARD
Columbus, Mississippi

TO THE EDITOR:

Terry Teachout's critical guide to 20th-century musical masterpieces is a public service and a reminder of how musically brilliant this century has in fact been, the efforts of the atonalists notwithstanding. The survey has the added virtue of endorsing my own judgment at many points.

I saw immediately that Mr. Teachout was on the right track when his first selection began with Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* and Ravel's elegant String Quartet. Mr. Teachout's use of the qualifier "perfect" for this latter work is noteworthy because Ravel, to my mind, is one of the few composers in whom that concept does not suggest "facile." But for gossamer perfection in composition and orchestration, one could hardly do better than Ravel's *Ma Mère l'Oye*. Mr. Teachout is also to be applauded for recognizing the greatness of Prokofiev's violin concertos, although I favor the more lyrical and accessible Second Concerto over the First, which Mr. Teachout lists.

I awaited the second installment of the series with anticipation to see if it passed the test of acknowledging Leoš Janáček's breathtaking Glagolitic Mass, with its singular blend of muscularity and soaring beauty. Another gold star here. Readers might, however, try the recording Sir Charles Mackerras made (on Chandos) with the Danish National Radio Symphony Orchestra and Choir in 1994, a few years after the Michael Tilson Thomas recording that Mr. Teachout recommends. Mackerras was the first to use the composer's original score, which treads closer to the edge than the previously standard performing version

Alas, not all is faultless in Mr. Teachout's gathering of gems. How does one explain the surprising neglect of Carl Nielsen? A list including Kurt Weill should have had room for one of this century's greatest symphonists.

The injustice to Nielsen notwithstanding, I will continue to look for Terry Teachout first when each new issue of COMMENTARY arrives.

CAROL STASWICK
Berkeley, California

TO THE EDITOR:

An enormous thank-you to Terry Teachout for his marvelous survey and his recommended recordings. Some may take issue with his fundamental attack on nontonalism. Alas, nontonalists, like leftists and original sin, may be all but inexpungeable. But just as few leftists ever lived in the Soviet Union, I doubt that many proponents of nontonalism actually listen to it in the privacy of their homes.

And now, on to the great good fun of making my way through the many unexplored pleasures on Mr. Teachout's list.

LAWRENCE FOSSI
Houston, Texas

TERRY TEACHOUT writes:

I wish I could persuade James Harrison Cohen to give 20th-century music another try. It is hard for me to imagine that one who appreciates Beethoven would be unable to hear anything but "cacophony" in Bartók's Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta. What surprised me, though, was that Mr. Cohen was the sole correspondent to voice such views. I was delighted to find that virtually all of the exceptionally large number of readers who were moved to comment on the series shared my love for the masterpieces of tonal modernism, and I was immensely gratified by the intensity and seriousness of their response. It is no secret that the American audience for classical music is shrinking, but letters like these indicate that there is ample reason for hope.

Revisiting my list several months after I drew it up has been a salutary experience, and to those who wonder why their favorite works were not included, I can only say that some of them probably should have been. Nearly every piece mentioned above is a favorite of mine, even the much-maligned *Ludus Tonalis*. Henryk Górecki is still alive, though, which accounts for the absence of his Third Symphony.

Alas, all lists are by definition incomplete, just as their authors are imperfect; I am embarrassed to confess, for example, that I recently heard for the first time a well-known piece that certainly should have been included, Arthur Honegger's Third Symphony, and I have no doubt that there are other compositions as yet undiscovered by me that are every bit as good as the ones on my list.

In this connection, I want to thank Steven R. Gerber for his thoughtful letter, which goes beyond the mere disputation of taste to make a number of valid and challenging points about the conceptual basis of my list. Though I do not think he is quite right to argue that one could easily name twenty pieces by Debussy or Bartók that are "better than any one piece by most of the other composers listed," it is certainly true that much of (say) Prokofiev is better than most of (say) Walton, and I did indeed deliberately draw up my list in such a way as to obscure this fact, preferring instead to stress

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the richness and stylistic variety of 20th-century music.

I do take issue, however, with Mr. Gerber's claim that it was my desire "to politicize the issues" that led me to call my list a "counter-canon." The problem, as he is no doubt aware, is that the issues have already been politicized, and then some. In one of the various discussions of "Musical Masterpieces of the Century" that have taken place on Internet-based music forums in recent weeks, a homosexual writer went so far as to declare that my belief in the superiority of tonality was the aesthetic equivalent of a right-wing politician's praising "family values." Perhaps he spoke more truly than he knew—close readers may have noticed my reference to "the natural law of tonality"—but the inclusion of such famously homosexual composers as Samuel Barber, Benjamin Britten, Francis Poulenc, and Aaron Copland (the last of whom was both a homosexual *and* a Communist) surely suggests that I know the difference between art and politics, sexual or otherwise.

Finally, my heartfelt thanks to all those who have asked me to turn "Musical Masterpieces of the Century" into a book. I am thinking about doing just that.

Alternative Medicine

TO THE EDITOR:

Samuel McCracken must have had fun tossing all alternative therapies into the same pot and declaring the whole stew unpalatable ["The New Snake Oil: A Field Guide," June]. But my own alternative doctors and medical nutritionists draw upon whatever has proved useful in any serious school of medical thought, including allopathic—or conventional—medicine. In chronic cases, they give priority to mild, preventive natural remedies, avoiding the harsh measures and surgery that may be needed in more acute cases. They do not fit Mr. McCracken's depiction of extremist alternative therapists who reject all allopathic treatment at all times.

Were there anything to these alternative therapies, Mr. McCracken suggests, they would have been tested scientifically. His standard is valid, but his notion of what gets tested is unrealistic. Testing for approval by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requires about $100 million. Drug companies channel most of their funds into the conventional rut. New medical uses for non-patentable vitamins do not interest them: without a patent, they have no hope of amortizing their costs.

Nevertheless, there have been studies of vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients. Over the years, the medical establishment has had to admit that more and more nutritional supplements work as claimed and that larger doses are needed for therapeutic use. In the meantime, untold numbers of people have suffered from the establishment's resistance to new ideas.

One might also turn around Mr. McCracken's warning that seriously ill patients can lose valuable time by trying untested alternative treatments. In fact, by the time many patients realize they have gotten nothing but torturesome side effects from, say, orthodox oncologists, their cancers have advanced too far for them to get relief from alternative therapies that have achieved some clinical success.

RICHARD H. SHULMAN
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

In his article, Samuel McCracken makes great sport of a number of the more ridiculous "cures" that have been on the market over the last hundred years, but he overlooks some arguments for the other side. The mainstream medical community has looked down its collective nose at a number of treatments that

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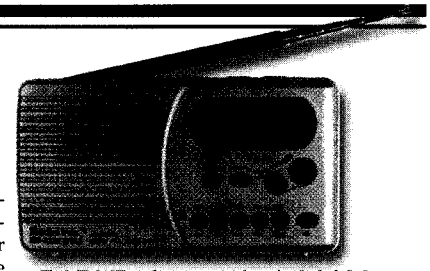

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are now known to be extremely beneficial. Vitamin therapy, for example, was considered useless at best for many years. Now there is a rush to acknowledge the value of folic acid during pregnancy, vitamins C and E for cardiovascular problems, etc. At the same time, a number of drugs approved by the FDA have turned out to be worse than the diseases they were designed to cure.

Without coming out and saying as much, Mr. McCracken seems to believe that the way to protect the public from unscrupulous hucksters like Andrew Weil, M.D., is for the FDA to clamp down a Big Brotherly hand on the entire alternative-medicine industry. In mainstream medicine, he states, the tradition is that "the arena of testing not be tainted by prejudice." Mr. McCracken is either naive or disingenuous. The idea that the FDA and mainstream medicine are somehow above bias is simply ludicrous. Now that the approval of new treatments and drugs is limited to governmental or quasi-governmental bodies, politics plays the lead role. The major drug and medical-device manufacturers spend enormous sums lobbying for approval of their products. The winners are typically those with the deepest pockets.

To suggest that we would all be better off if the FDA or some other government body were regulating every substance that we eat or consume sounds suspiciously like the rhetoric of the far Left. One of the freedoms that this country once guaranteed was the freedom to make choices about things that affect our own lives, even if those choices are the wrong ones.

CHRIS STEINCAMP
Wichita, Kansas

TO THE EDITOR:

Samuel McCracken fails even to attempt a serious analysis of why so many Americans have sought help outside the mainstream of Western medicine. There are good and bad practitioners of both Western medicine and the major forms of alternative medicine. But there is a fundamental difference in attitude that prepares these disciplines to deal effectively with different kinds of situations.

Central to the Western approach is the idea that pain and sickness are the enemy and must be vanquished. The alternative view is that symptoms are vital signals of a more general disorder and the body should be helped to set that disorder right. Sometimes the Western approach is warranted, as when pain is truly unbearable or when acute injuries result in shock or hemorrhage. But with a variety of chronic conditions, the alternative approach is sometimes more suitable. The very power of Western medicine to suppress specific symptoms can stand in the way of achieving the long-term health of the individual.

Western medicine has a strong theoretical base, following in the tradition of physical science, and classifies ailments in broad categories. Alternative medicine is empirically based and relies on observation of the individual. Many Americans are dissatisfied with the pigeonholing of Western medicine and seek individualized alternatives. They are willing, for example, to explore Chinese herbal medicine, which draws upon an ancient, continuously evolving tradition of observation and prescription. I may not know the precise mechanism by which such practices work, but, properly applied, they often do.

Americans can be viewed as carrying out a large-scale clinical experiment to find out for themselves what works. In doing so, they are providing all of us with a wider range of alternatives to choose from. It is fair to say of critics like Mr. McCracken that ridicule may amuse, but it does not promote health.

HARRY RUBIN
Berkeley, California

TO THE EDITOR:

I have no problem with the argument that all medical hypotheses need to be scrutinized in the critical light of scientific investigation. But we must also acknowledge that there are some matters that do not lend themselves to such analysis. Let us take, for instance, the existential questions that arise in medicine: why do some people get sick while others do not, even when exposed to the same pathogen? Why are some people healed while others, who are equally afflicted, die?

Unfortunately, in his devotion to science and its "double-blind" standard of research, Samuel McCracken is guilty of scientism, the belief that if you cannot measure something, it does not exist. Most of us who treat patients struggle to make clinical judgments based on imperfect knowledge. We use whatever means inspire hope and allow us to touch our patients in healing ways. The modalities of alternative medicine—touch, empathy, loving-kindness, belief—are used by most clinicians. We integrate these things into our therapeutic repertoire to help our patients become agents in their own healing.

Mr. McCracken, who, I suspect, has never treated a patient, denigrates Andrew Weil, M.D., who has treated many, as a shrewd manipulator whose irrational ideas are perpetrated by snake oil, charm, and a memorable beard. Weil has never minimized the genius and technology of scientific medicine. Instead, he has opened patients and practitioners to expanding the ways in which people are healed.

Since Mr. McCracken's ninety-year-old grandmother swore by her homeopathic doctor, I would have thought that it might have opened him to how many ways there are to help people heal.

CARL A. HAMMERSCHLAG, M.D.
Phoenix, Arizona

TO THE EDITOR:

Samuel McCracken argues that there is no evidence homeopathy works. This is simply false. Go to any homeopathic study group—there are hundreds scattered across the country—and you will find individuals like me who were sick or dying, went to a homeopathic practitioner, and were cured. Any honest examination of homeopathy needs to explain this phenomenon. Saying that those of us who believe in and utilize homeopathy are delusional is not enough.

True, there is very little *scientific* evidence that homeopathy works. But this is

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because the scientific model that orthodox medicine has created does not work when applied to homeopathy. This model requires that a substance be given to a large number of patients and then cure a statistically significant number of them. Homeopathy cannot be validated in this way because, according to homeopathic theory, each patient is unique and must be treated individually. If a homeopathic physician is treating a paranoid-schizophrenic who has a pathological fear of snakes, he will use one medicine. A paranoid-schizophrenic who dreams he is flying every night will get another medicine.

It should be clear that orthodox medicine simply does not work very well. Hundreds of thousands of the mentally ill wander our streets, and epidemics of cancer and other maladies terrify the populace. In the face of this, we pour billions of dollars into a medical system that, at best, is capable only of repressing the symptoms of disease. Should we be surprised that a significant portion of the population turns to alternative forms of medicine?

SUSAN JORDAN
Los Angeles, California

TO THE EDITOR:

I would add to Samuel McCracken's very lucid article that it was political pressure from "believers" in alternative medicine that forced the National Institutes of Health to create an office on alternative medicine. I use the term "believers" deliberately because of its religious connotation; those involved in promulgating alternative medicine claim that they have a different paradigm of what constitutes knowledge and can see a different reality in the workings of living systems, especially the human body. They do not depend on rational, evidence-based, scientific studies. The fact that medical schools have nonetheless been quick to jump on the bandwagon to do alternative-medicine research is not surprising. Administrators are prostitutes, and will go where the money is, even if it means giving legitimacy to outright quackery.

SHELDON F. GOTTLIEB
Boynton Beach, Florida

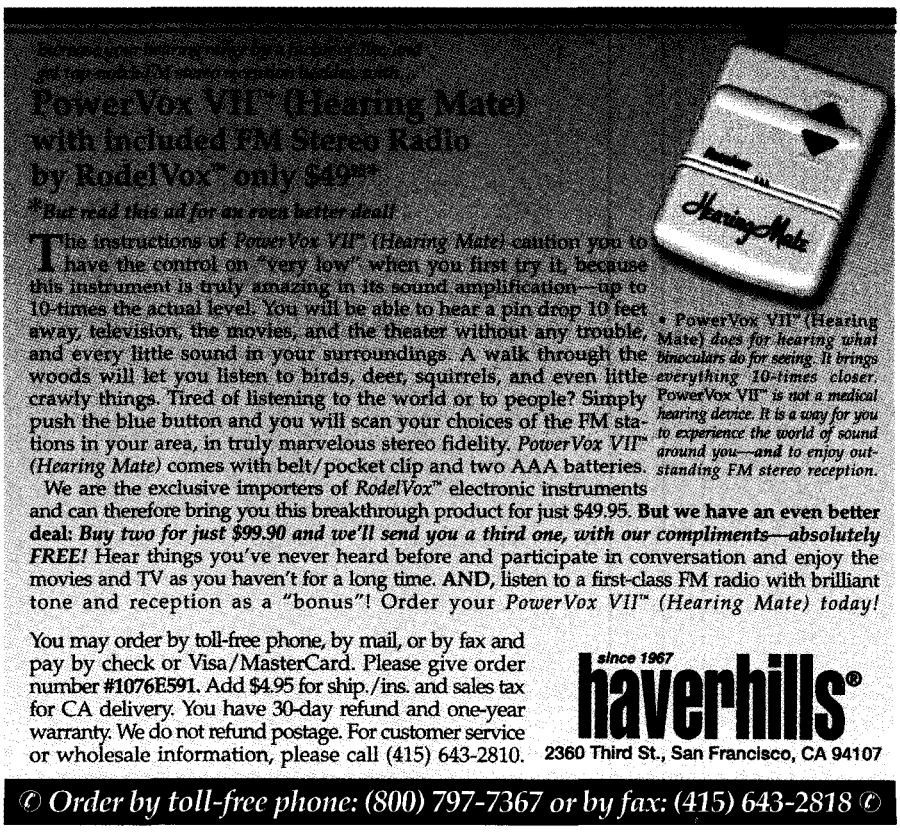
TO THE EDITOR:

I greatly appreciated Samuel McCracken's "field guide" to what is now termed "alternative medicine." Sadly, nothing on this subject that has appeared in any of the medical journals has even come close to the clarity of Mr. McCracken's article.

As a member of the faculty at Northwestern University Medical School, having graduated from the University of Iowa Medical School and completed specialty training at the University of California's San Francisco Medical School, I agree with Mr. McCracken when he says that "whenever medical schools accommodate new programs in alternative medicine, they also accommodate the severely relaxed standards of evidence that disfigure it, . . . which cannot but weaken the standards applied in mainstream medicine itself."

The alumni publications of all three schools have featured major articles on alternative medicine within the past few years, none of which has exhibited anything approaching the objectivity of Mr. McCracken's article. Moreover, Northwestern now offers first-year medical students a seminar on "Alternative Medicine in Chicago." Next year, it plans to offer fourth-year students the opportunity to work with a group that "blends allopathic medicine with more alternative modalities." David J. Zeiger, D.O., serves as preceptor for the students at the American Whole Health center, where all sorts of alternative therapies are offered. It is my impression that the University of Iowa is even less objective in this area, as Mr. McCracken has noted.

There is no question that he is correct in concluding that the growing respectability of alternative medi-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cine will have "deeply disturbing consequences to the national health"

CAROL K. THARP, M.D.
Winnetka, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR:

In his amusing and comprehensive article, Samuel McCracken states that "there are a great many alternatives out there." There are indeed. If we define alternative medicine as any health-related method or practice for which scientific evidence concerning safety and efficacy is lacking or largely contradictory, the numbers are even higher than most health professionals know. Two years ago, *American Medical News*, published by the American Medical Association, stated that "alternative modalities" numbered about 200. By then, however, I had already come across about 1,200 nonbiomedical health-related methods. The latest on-line version of *The Expanded Dictionary of Metaphysical Healthcare* (http://www.hcrc.org/diction/dict.html) names well over 1,300 such methods (most of them mystical, supernaturalistic, or vitalistic). Scores of others are in use, including, for example, 40 forms, variations, or hybrids of Qigong (Chinese yoga) alone. There is no end in sight.

JACK RASO
American Council on Science and Health
New York City

SAMUEL MCCRACKEN writes:

It is hard to believe that Richard H. Shulman read my article very closely. He claims that I treat all alternative therapies as part of the same unpalatable stew, not noticing, for example, that I cite persuasive evidence that both hypnosis and biofeedback work. Nor do I find fault with alternative therapists, as Mr. Shulman claims, for failing to embrace some aspects of allopathy.

My problem is with their embrace of quackery. Mr. Shulman's medical advisers may show respect for diversity by utilizing some allopathic methods; one hopes that in doing so they do not contravene the medical-licensing laws. His account of their practice is suffused with the usual polemical rhetoric: they eschew "harsh" methods and prefer "natural" ones. The quack ever promises the painless cure, and "natural" is either a meaningless term or one that denies man his place in nature. This ideological approach to healing is common in alternative medicine: the efficacy of a therapy is deduced from its "naturalness" or some other meaningless shibboleth. Harry Rubin's letter pursues a similar tack, with his criticism of mainstream medicine for treating disease as an "enemy."

In discussing the dearth of research validation for various alternative nostrums, Mr. Shulman confuses two kinds of medical research. The testing for an FDA license is indeed expensive—although it is not routinely as expensive as he claims—but any pharmaceutical that makes it through to clinical tests on humans has already shown promise through in-vitro and animal tests. If researchers in alternative medicine have been able to induce therapeutic effects in rats, they are keeping quiet about it.

In any event, the cost of FDA approval is a red herring: the alternative pharmacoepia is not subject to FDA rules. And, indeed, a substantial part of the alternative armamentarium is not even pharmaceutical: chiropractic and other forms of body work could demonstrate efficacy in controlled tests while thumbing their noses at the FDA.

Mr. Shulman's claim that patients waste their time on orthodox oncology and thus deny themselves the benefits of alternative therapies would be stronger if he cited the studies in which he says these therapies have "achieved some clinical success." But he does not even tell us what the therapies are, let alone the evidence for their success.

Several of my correspondents rely on the notion that, since alternative medicine is not subject to the tests applicable to mainstream medicine, I am by definition asking the wrong questions. Susan Jordan, for example, says that homeopathy, by treating each patient as literally and absolutely *sui generis*, is, in effect, immune from statistical analysis. This is nice work if you can get it. But of course—to use Miss Jordan's own example—it would be possible to compare the success of homeopathic treatments for schizophrenia against allopathic treatments for schizophrenia without pitting particular homeopathic medications against particular allopathic ones.

Chris Steincamp uses one of the hoariest tactics of those who have no evidence to refute what an opponent says: he takes me to task for not coming out and saying what I really believe. In this case, Mr. Steincamp makes the bizarre claim that I advocate giving the FDA total control over everything we ingest. This is nonsense: nothing I say implies this. There is a tremendous difference between arguing (for example) that homeopathy is a foolish quackery and urging that homeopathy should be banned by law. Mr. Steincamp's position is equivalent to my asserting that he believes ("without actually coming out and saying as much") that because my views on alternative medicine are wrongheaded, I have no right to publish them.

When Mr. Steincamp portrays me as claiming that mainstream medicine is "above bias," he is, to use his own terms, being either naive or disingenuous. I do claim, and rightly so, that mainstream medicine tries to minimize bias. I also note that it is, like all human endeavors, fallible. Mr. Steincamp's riposte—that the FDA's drug-approval process is controlled by extrascientific lobbying—is conspicuously lacking in specificity or documentation.

Susan Jordan cites multiple study groups as proof of homeopathy's efficacy. This begs two crucial questions: whether these believers have been properly diagnosed to begin with, and whether they have in fact been cured. To agree with her would thus require an act of faith. But a study that detailed cases in which patients were determined by allopathy to suffer from particular illnesses and also determined by allopathy to have been cured by homeopathy—now, that would compel assent not through faith but through reason. We are still waiting for such a study. None of my correspondents cites one.

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Carl A. Hammerschlag is perfectly right to take issue with the notion that if something cannot be measured, it does not exist. But that is certainly not my position, nor is it that of mainstream medicine, which could accurately be summarized as "if something cannot be perceived, there can be no evidence that it exists." Dr. Hammerschlag appears to believe that by labeling certain questions—for example, why some persons exposed to a pathogen become ill and others do not—as "existential," he has removed them from the arena of scientific study. This is a distinctly odd notion, since the particular issue he raises is intimately tied up with immunology.

That Dr. Hammerschlag's remarks are just as infused with assertion and vagueness as those by some of my correspondents who do not hold M.D.'s is further evidence of the penetration of snake oil into orthodox medicine, as is indeed his website, where one can learn about his specialty of "Psychoneuroimmunology," which replaces what he regards as the outdated germ theory.

I am grateful to Sheldon F. Gottlieb, Carol K. Tharp, and Jack Raso for their kind words, even though Mr. Raso (whose own website is a remarkable and useful place) brings the kind of news that among the Persians would have led to unfortunate consequences for the messenger.

Central America

TO THE EDITOR:

I cannot begin to unravel all the flaws in Mark Falcoff's article, "Why We Were in Central America" [May], but it is worth exploring what seems to be his purpose: deflecting the criticism of Ronald Reagan and his administration implicit in the recent United Nations report on Guatemala and in Bill Clinton's apology to the Guatemalan people. One must recall that Reagan hailed General Rios Montt's military government in Guatemala as "totally dedicated to democracy" and claimed that it had gotten a "bum rap" from human-rights organizations and certain American reporters—this, despite corroborated accounts from U.S. intelligence of hundreds of Mayan villages having been eradicated. Based on internal documents recently made public, the Reagan administration was well aware that the Guatemalan military was engaged in a systematic scorched-earth campaign against the Mayans.

Beyond denying that atrocities were taking place, Reagan's chief response to reports of abuses in Central America was to attack and attempt to discredit the human-rights investigators and journalists who disclosed the atrocities, thereby intimidating the American media into acquiescent silence. A Reagan appointee at the U.S. embassy in Guatemala maintained that "a concerted disinformation campaign" was being waged in the U.S. against the Guatemalan government "by groups supporting the Communist insurgency in Guatemala," while the State Department White Paper of December 1981 blamed the violence and human-rights violations in Guatemala on "leftist groups and their terrorist methods, prompted and supported by Cuba." Recently released documents show that the CIA consistently reported the truth to the Reagan administration. As the UN Peace Commission has confirmed, 95 percent of the atrocities were carried out by the Guatemalan military and its civilian patrols.

While repeating the Reagan administration's denials of the severity of these human-rights violations, Mr. Falcoff blames those that did occur on the Carter administration's cutoff of military aid to Guatemala, which he claims removed any U.S. leverage to restrain abuses. Of course, as soon as Reagan took office he moved to overturn the arms embargo against Guatemala. This led to sales of more than $3 million in June 1981 and more than $6 million in January 1983, both during the period Mr. Falcoff claims the Guatemalans were not being supplied. Since the targets were unarmed villages and poorly armed guerrillas, these amounted to major military infusions. Leverage to stem abuses was much less the goal than abetting their perpetuation.

R.H. YURMAN
San Francisco, California

TO THE EDITOR:

Mark Falcoff seems to think that during the cold war there was a sharp contrast between U.S. policy in El Salvador and Guatemala and that this difference demonstrates American beneficence. The record says otherwise. During the early 1980's, the Reagan administration repeatedly defended the human-rights record of both countries and claimed that most atrocities were the responsibility of extremists on the Right and the Left who had no connection with the government. We now know, as was clear at the time, that the vast majority of the tens of thousands of murders in both countries were committed by the security forces and that the Reagan administration knew this even as it publicly lied about it. The clear message to everyone in Central America was that the United States government had no serious concern about human-rights violations committed in the name of anti-Communism, except to the extent that they posed a public-relations problem in getting aid approved in Congress.

The human-rights record improved in El Salvador beginning in 1984 as a result of American pressure, but the ultimate source of that pressure was human-rights activists and the congressional liberals who threatened to cut off military aid. El Salvador did not really become a democracy until after the guerrillas demonstrated in 1989 that they were still capable of launching a major offensive, and the government demonstrated that it was still capable of murdering priests. After that, the various factions, including the U.S. government, gave up hope of achieving a military victory, and the war ended with a negotiated settlement, something that the Reagan administration had not been interested in. The war also ended in Guatemala, and the human-rights situation greatly improved, but Mr. Falcoff seems to realize it is a bit much to pretend that this also was a triumph of American policy.

Mr. Falcoff makes much of the fact that other countries stepped in to arm Guatemala after the U.S.

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cut off military aid, and he specifically mentions Italy, Spain, and France. Which of these three supplied the Guatemalan army with Israeli Galil rifles? As anyone who looks hard enough can discover, Israel played a role in training and arming Guatemalan troops, acting, one suspects, as a surrogate for the United States.

It is time that our country admit its recent crimes, just as other governments have done in recent years. This would not be admitting that the United States was the moral equivalent of the Soviet Union during the cold war, for clearly, on the whole, ours was the just cause and theirs was not. But it would be admitting that not all the evil committed in that conflict was committed by one side.

DONALD JOHNSON
Nyack, New York

MARK FALCOFF writes:

Old myths die hard—and some have not died at all, as these letters amply demonstrate.

R.H. Yurman strongly disagrees with my characterization of our arms embargo with respect to Guatemala, particularly during the Reagan administration. Let me confess that he is partially—though not crucially—correct. The term "embargo" suggests a total cutoff, in this case of military or military-related products. Actually what we had was a suspension of military assistance (subsidized materiel or "grants" of weaponry) and training, which extended from 1978 up to 1986 (when President Vinizio Cerezo took office).

Military *sales* to Guatemala were quite another matter. These proceeded uninterruptedly under both the Carter and Reagan administrations, though in fact they took a sharp *decline* under Reagan. Here are the figures: 1978, $2.4 million; 1979, $3.4 million; 1980, $1.9 million; 1981, $462,000; 1982, $631,000; 1983, $668,000; 1984, $546,000; 1985, $966,000; 1986, $916,000. (Source: Defense Security Cooperation Agency, *U.S. Security Assistance to the American Republics, 1960-1993.*) However you slice it, these figures are greatly at variance with Mr. Yurman's claim of $3-million sales in June 1981 and $6 million in January 1983. I have at least cited my sources; I await news of Mr. Yurman's.

What were we selling the Guatemalan military? The term "military sales" covers a vast range of things besides guns and ammunition. It includes safety equipment for previously purchased planes, such as emergency-ejection seats; radios; medical equipment; miscellaneous parts; etc. Am I fudging matters here to cover up the sale of lethal weaponry? No, I am not. As a matter of policy, the Reagan administration (and, I feel quite sure, its Democratic predecessor) did not sell small arms, automatic weapons, or explosive ordinance to Guatemala.

As for President Reagan's comments on General Rios Montt, let us recall that these were made at the very beginning of the latter's regime when many in Washington (and Guatemala City as well) nourished the hope—naive, it now seems, in retrospect—that because of his unusual religious background he might prove a great advance over the military dictator he replaced. President Reagan was wrong, and the language he chose to use was singularly unfortunate. But his momentary opinion had virtually no impact on the situation on the ground, for good or for ill.

I cannot leave this subject, however, without inviting reflection on one rather inconvenient fact. Rios Montt failed to win the presidency of Guatemala in free and open elections in 1990 only because he was ruled ineligible to run. In the event, his designated surrogate, Jorge Serrano Elias, triumphed roundly in the runoff. I offer this not as an endorsement of the political wisdom of the

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Guatemalan electorate, but merely to underscore the fact that to very many people in his country Rios Montt represents something more than a pathological maniac.

By citing Israeli arms sales to Guatemala, Donald Johnson apparently thinks he is scoring an indirect hit on Washington. Actually, what he has done is to reveal his own ignorance of how the "gray market" in tactical weaponry works worldwide. Guatemala was able to provision itself from a wide range of non-U.S. sources, some of which—far from being "pariah states" in collusion with the Pentagon and the CIA, such as I take it Mr. Johnson finds Israel to be—would normally win the warm approval of Left-thinking Americans for their *soi-disant* progressive internal social and economic arrangements.

Mr. Johnson likewise misunderstands my own point of view on Central America's civil wars. He attributes to me the notion that there was a "sharp contrast between U.S. policy in El Salvador and Guatemala and that this difference demonstrates American beneficence." Actually, my views are considerably more complicated than that. Stated somewhat telegraphically, however, they amount to the statement that the tactical situations in the two countries were greatly different, due in large measure to the presence (or absence) of American military influence.

The Guatemalan case demonstrates that a "hands-off" policy did not produce an improvement in human-rights performance—quite the opposite, in fact. In El Salvador, precisely because we were so heavily involved, we were in a position to press for such improvements. If Mr. Johnson wishes to attribute this happy turn of events to "human-rights activists and the congressional liberals who threatened to cut off military aid," he is free to do so, but we are very fortunate indeed that they did not make good on their threat. The proof consists in the fact that 1980—the last year of the Carter arms embargo—was the bloodiest in Salvadoran history. I am grateful, however, that Mr. Johnson desists from accusing the United States of arming and training right-wing death squads in both countries—still an article of faith in many circles.

As for whether El Salvador was or was not a democracy, I thought I made it clear in my article that the elections of 1984 were rigged, not so that the Left would lose, but rather so that the far Right's candidate, Roberto D'Aubuisson, would not win.

Mr. Johnson seems to think that the U.S. decision to back the peace talks in El Salvador was due to a tardy recognition that Washington could not win on the battlefield and therefore had to settle for a (to it) second-best solution. His interpretation stands the facts on their head. The last great offensive of the FMLN failed, demonstrating that it could not achieve a military victory. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union imploded and the cold war came to an end, thus removing El Salvador from the geopolitical conflict in which it was entangled. From that point on, El Salvador's future form of government became a matter of official indifference to the United States, and it could easily afford the luxury of supporting peace talks and the ultimate settlement. Nonetheless, let the record show that that settlement greatly differed from the one that "human-rights activists and congressional liberals" had been urging upon us during the Reagan years, namely, one in which the FMLN guerrillas would get at the conference table the political, military, and diplomatic power that they had not won on the battlefield or at the ballot box.

Though it is perhaps ungracious to say so, may I add that subsequent events in El Salvador have in no way ratified the notion—widely retailed by critics of the Reagan administration at the time—that the FMLN represented a huge repressed majority of Salvadorans yearning to breathe free of capitalism, imperialism, and other such evils.

That anti-Communism formed the central arch of U.S. Central American policy for many years, no one can deny. For the record, however, I personally never believed that strategic withdrawal from that region (as many of Mr. Johnson's "human-rights activists and congressional liberals" were urging upon us all along) would lead to an immediate Communist takeover of the isthmus. No doubt that would have happened eventually, but by way of reaction—to a right-wing bloodbath that would have preceded it. And to the extent that U.S. involvement and influence prevented that from happening, I have no problem calling it beneficent.

Muslims in America

TO THE EDITOR:

Though he makes a few passing remarks about mainstream Islam, Daniel Pipes ["America's Muslims Against America's Jews," May] suggests that Muslims are a single bloc, intrinsically anti-Semitic and driven by hatred. This is offensive to Muslim sensitivities and contributes to the demonization of Muslims.

There are extremist groups in all religions, but one should not generalize from these cases. After all, many Jews expelled from Spain migrated to the Ottoman empire, where they were welcomed, protected, and never forced to convert. The modern Turkish Republic has continued this Islamic tradition of religious pluralism. Hundreds of Jews who fled from Nazi oppression found a tolerant attitude in Turkey, and today Jews and Christians are equal citizens with Muslim Turks and succeed in trade and industry.

One should not equate fanatic Arab nationalism with Islam itself. The use of religious discourse and sacred images to support violent crimes can be found in all religions, but that does not make all their followers extremists.

TALIP KUÇUKCAN
Center for Islamic Studies
Istanbul, Turkey

TO THE EDITOR:

Congratulations to Daniel Pipes for his survey of the overwhelming influence of extremists in the American Muslim community. I would offer a minor but significant correction. Mr. Pipes rendered part of the misspelled letter found in the terrorist Abu Maizar's

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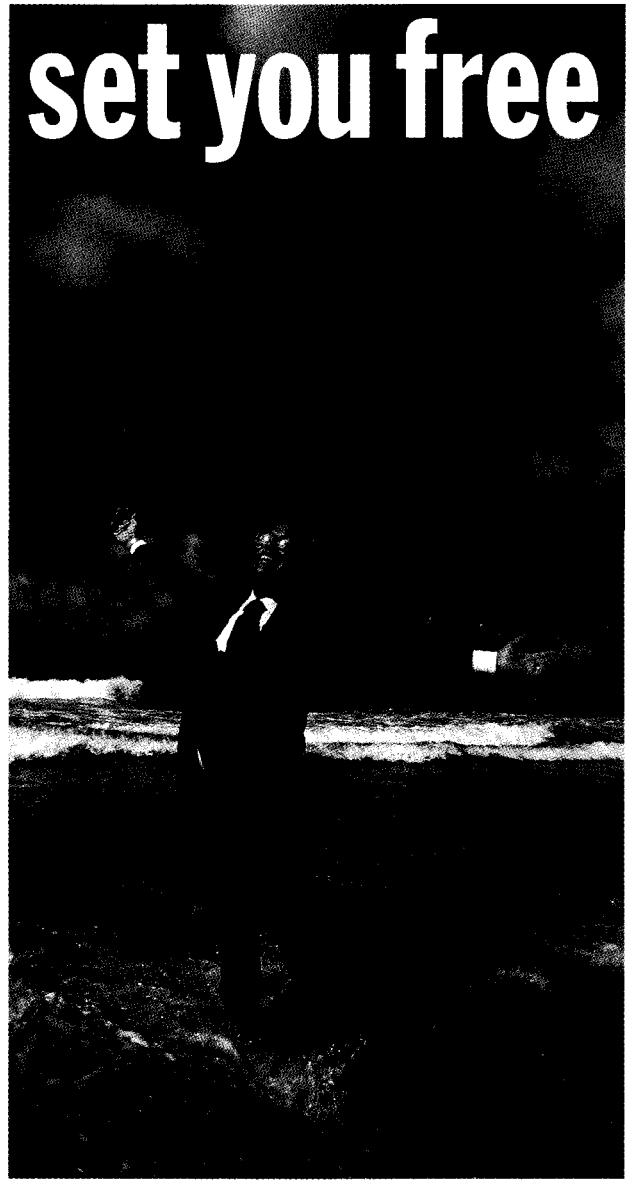

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apartment in 1997 as follows: "Alljeihd [the jihad] for all agssa [ages] movement." I believe, however, that the movement's correct name is "Jihad for Al-Aqsa"—that is, a movement against alleged Jewish threats to the security of the al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem.

On a broader point, I would suggest that Mr. Pipes has failed to distinguish adequately between Arab Islam in the U.S., which is totally dominated by the extremist mentality, and non-Arab Islam in the U.S. This division has been dramatically illustrated by the varying responses to the U.S.-NATO action in Kosovo. Numerous Arab advocates joined in the chorus of attacks on the intervention, claiming a secret NATO agenda, identifying Serbia with Israel, attempting to suppress Muslim awareness of Israel's outreach to the Kosovar Albanian refugees, and, in many cases, joining anti-NATO demonstrations. By contrast, Pakistani and Southeast Asian Muslims in America joined their Balkan co-religionists in supporting the basic goals, if not the details, of the intervention and in rushing to assist the victims.

STEPHEN SCHWARTZ
San Francisco Chronicle
San Francisco, California

DANIEL PIPES writes:

Talip Kuçukcan accuses me of thinking that "Muslims are a single bloc." Not at all. If he were to look at my article again, he would note this sentence: "It is a fortunate fact that [radical] Muslims do not represent all Muslims in the United States," followed by two paragraphs discussing moderate Muslims. I am very aware that moderate Muslims tend to get overlooked, and I do what I can to argue on their behalf. As for Turks being different, I agree. Again, Mr. Kuçukcan should look closely at the article, which, after describing the one-sided, Islamist-dominated discussion in the United States, continues: "[I]n startling contrast to countries like Turkey and Egypt, where a lively debate is taking place between moderates and fundamentalists, here, in the land of the free, the moderate majority hardly has a voice."

I thank Stephen Schwartz for his kind words and accept his suggestion about "Jihad for Al-Aqsa." His distinction between the politics of Arabic-speakers and non-Arabic-speakers in the United States is an interesting one. A couple of points in response.

• Arabs are not, in fact, "totally dominated by the extremist mentality." To cite just a few prominent examples, Muhammad Hisham Kabbani, the leading anti-Islamist figure I quote in my article, is of Lebanese origin, as is Riad Nachef of the Association of Islamic Charitable Projects, while the late Saif al-Ashmawy of the Voice of Peace came from Egypt.

• On the other hand, Iranians and Pakistanis, to take two groups of non-Arabs, are at least as widely conspiracy-minded and as anti-Semitic as, say, Tunisians and Kuwaitis. The only ethnic group that really stands out as different, I say with a nod to Mr. Kuçukcan, is the Turks, who are less suspicious of the United States, more secular, and distinctly more politically moderate than other Muslims.

This said, there is also some truth to Mr. Schwartz's observation, in that Arabs have disproportionately tended to use violence in the United States. Although several Pakistanis and American black converts to Islam were indicted in the World Trade Center trials and Osama bin Laden prosecutions, the overwhelming majority of those involved were Arab. Further, while Pakistani groups like Jama'at-i Islami are radical, they are distinctly less violent here than are Hezbollah, Hamas, and Egypt's Jam'at al-Islamiya.

Hitler's Bomb

TO THE EDITOR:

In "Building Hitler's Bomb" [May], Jeremy Bernstein has the physics of nuclear reactors wrong. A reactor operates with U-235, not U-238. The latter fissions not "when it is struck by slow neutrons" but when it is struck by fast neutrons. While it is true that U-235 and Pu-239 (the plutonium isotope used in the bomb) are fissionable by fast neutrons, they will also undergo fission by slow neutrons.

In addition, Mr. Bernstein states that Germany found heavy water hard to come by. In fact, however, Norway already had a heavy-water production plant in operation at the time of the German invasion and occupation in 1940. Whether its capacity would have been sufficient to support a German reactor-development program, I cannot say. But the Allies must have thought it was, since the plant was destroyed in 1943 by British commandos in concert with the Norwegian underground.

IRA CHARAK
Western Springs, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR:

Jeremy Bernstein's fine article on the role of Werner Heisenberg in Hitler's atomic-bomb effort brings additional scholarship to bear on the myth that Heisenberg heroically thwarted Nazi attempts to develop the bomb. I only wish Mr. Bernstein had dealt more extensively with the secret recordings made by British intelligence of Heisenberg and his fellow German scientists when they were incarcerated at Farm Hall. These Farm Hall transcripts reveal Heisenberg's spontaneous thoughts when he first learned of the bombing of Hiroshima from a news broadcast. According to Malcolm MacPherson, in his book *Time Bomb* (1986), this is what Heisenberg said after hearing the news:

> More funds were first made available in Germany in the spring of 1942 . . . when we had absolutely certain proof that this business [the atomic bomb] was possible. . . . We did not muster the moral courage to recommend that the government should employ 120,000 people in spring 1942 to develop this business.

If "moral courage" is the correct translation in this context, the proposition that Heisenberg was trying to sabotage the data that would have made an atomic bomb feasible becomes untenable.

Additionally, in order to be approved by the Gestapo, Heisenberg's meeting with Niels Bohr in Copenhagen in September 1941 must have served some Nazi pur-

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Arabian Fables (II)

More fanciful Arab myths to sway world opinion.

Earlier this year, we published our message, "Arabian Fables (I)", in which we made clear how the Arab propaganda machine creates myths and lies with which to misinform the world. We discussed the myths of the "Palestinians" and of the "West Bank" and the mythical concept of "occupied territories". In today's message, we shall address three more of these myths.

What are some of these myths?

Jerusalem ("Arab East Jerusalem"). The Arabs have assiduously propagated the myths that Jerusalem is an Arab capital, that (after Mecca and Medina) Jerusalem is their third holy city, and that it is intolerable to them that infidels (Jews) are in possession of it.

The reality of course is that Jerusalem was never an Arab capital and that it was, until the Jews revitalized it, a dusty provincial city that hardly played any economic, social, or political role. Jerusalem is mentioned hundreds of times in the Jewish Bible and has been the center of the Jewish faith and the focus of Jewish longing ever since the Romans destroyed the Temple in the early years of the first millenium. Not once is Jerusalem mentioned in the Koran.

> "The Arab propaganda machine has created myths that have been accepted by much of the world. No peace in the Middle East is possible until those Arab myths have been exposed for what they are!"

As to "East Jerusalem": There is East Saint Louis, there is East Hampton, and there used to be East Berlin, but, until the Arab propaganda machine created the concept, there was never in history an "East Jerusalem", let alone an "Arab East Jerusalem".

The eastern part of Jerusalem is now predominantly inhabited by Arabs, though their proportion is decreasing. But what is the reason for this? It is because the Jordanians destroyed all traces of Jewish presence from the eastern part of the city and drove all the Jews out during the 19 years (between 1948 and 1967) in which they were in occupation of the eastern part of the city. The world, informed by Arab propaganda, considers those Jews who wish to return to the eastern part of the city to be troublemakers or worse.

The concept of Jerusalem being a holy Arab city and the capital of whatever political entity the "Palestinians" may eventually form is a myth and so of course is the concept of "Arab East Jerusalem".

"Settlements". When Jordan came into possession of Judea/Samaria and the eastern part of Jerusalem, following the invasion of the newly-formed Jewish state, and stayed in occupation for 19 years, it systematically obliterated all Jewish villages in the area under their occupation, drove out the Jewish inhabitants, and left the area "judenrein" (free of Jews) – the first time that concept had been applied since the Nazis created it during their short and bloody reign in Germany. When the Israelis recovered these territories, they rebuilt these villages, created new ones, and built new towns and suburbs to existing cities, especially Jerusalem.

The Arabs decided to call these towns and villages "settlements", with their connotation of illegitimacy and impermanence. The world, including the United States, is much agitated over these population centers and, goaded by the Arabs, declares them to be impediments to peace. What nonsense! Nobody considers the tens of thousands of Arabs who continue to stream to these territories as impediments to peace.

The term "settlements", too, is a propaganda myth created by the Arabs.

"Refugees". In 1948, when six Arab armies invaded the Jewish state in order to destroy it on the very day of its birth, broadcasts by the advancing Arab armies appealed to the resident Arabs to leave their homes so as not to be in the way of the invaders. As soon as the "quick victory" was won, they could return to their homes and would also enjoy the loot from the Jews, who would have been driven into the sea. It didn't turn out quite that way. Those Arabs who, despite the urgings of the Jews to stay and to remain calm, foolishly left, became refugees. Those who decided not to yield to those blandishments are now, and have been for over 50 years, citizens of Israel, with all the same rights and privileges as their Jewish fellows.

But what happened to those refugees – by best estimates about 600,000 of them? Did their "Arab brethren" allow them to settle in their countries, to work, and to become productive citizens and useful members of their societies? No! They kept and still keep them, their children, their grandchildren, and in some cases even their great-grandchildren, in miserable "refugee camps", so that they can be used as political and military pawns in order to keep the burning hatred against Israel alive and in order to supply the manpower for the unremitting fight against Israel.

During those more than fifty years, Israel has taken in more than three million Jewish immigrants from all parts of the world and has integrated them productively into its society. According to the "Palestinians", the Arab "refugees" have now marvelously increased to five million(!). It is the intent and fervent desire of the Arabs that all of them should return to Israel so as to destroy the country without the necessity of war.

The "refugees" are a red herring and another myth created by the Arab propaganda machine.

The Arab propaganda machine, aided by the most high-powered public relations firms in the United States and all over, has created myths that, by dint of constant repetition, have been accepted as truth by much of the world. No sensible discussion, no peace in the Middle East, is possible until those Arab myths have been exposed for what they are.

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pose. It seems entirely possible that at that time, with the fall of Moscow a near certainty and with it, the resumption of the blitz of British cities, the German aim was to use Bohr as a conduit to warn of even more horrible devastation if the Allies refused to parley. Many in power in England had already quietly made known their favorable opinion of such discussions. It could hardly have been anticipated by the Germans that by the time Bohr's fearful news reached the West, Russia would still be a mighty player, the U.S. would be in the war, and the response would be not capitulation but the Manhattan Project.

M. DONALD COLEMAN
Mamaroneck, New York

JEREMY BERNSTEIN writes:

Nuclear reactors operate with natural uranium, which is 0.7 percent U-235 and most of the rest U-238. It is, as Ira Charak says, the U-235 that is fissioned in a reactor. On the matter of heavy water: the Germans were committed to using heavy water, which was difficult to obtain, rather than the more readily available graphite, because of an error in an experiment conducted by the German scientist Walter Bothe. Bothe was trying to determine if graphite was a suitable moderator—a material that would slow down neutrons in a reactor—but his sample was contaminated with a tiny amount of boron, which absorbs neutrons. It was then concluded that graphite was not effective. Our program was spared such a mistake because Leo Szilard was a fanatic for obtaining purified graphite. And it worked! The real point here is that because the German program was not centralized, Bothe's experiments were not widely known and so were never checked.

I might have noted that heavy water was not available in Germany but in Norway, an occupied and hostile country. As Mr. Charak points out, one of the great stories of the war is how the British and Norwegians managed to destroy the supply. But even if they had not, there might not have been enough heavy water for the job. Hans Bethe, who left Germany in 1935 and later headed the theoretical division at Los Alamos, told me that Heisenberg underestimated the amount that would have been needed in developing a nuclear reactor.

Here is what bothers me about M. Donald Coleman's scenario. Let us assume that Heisenberg's mission was to use Bohr as a conduit to intimidate the Allies. Why then did he not tell Bohr about the one thing that would really have intimidated them: the fact that the Germans knew about plutonium (as it came to be called), which at that time looked like the royal road to making a nuclear weapon? I do not know if it was the British who first told Bohr of the plutonium or whether he learned about it a little later at Los Alamos, but it is clear that he did not know of it before he left Denmark. Again, it was Hans Bethe who told me that when Bohr got to Los Alamos, he knew very little about the bomb. As a matter of fact, Robert Oppenheimer assigned the then very young Richard Feynman to bring Bohr up to speed on the project.

I have written an entire book on the Farm Hall transcripts, *Hitler's Uranium Club*, in which, with the aid of David Cassidy, the whole history is revealed.

The Spy

TO THE EDITOR:

In "The Forger and the Spy" [May], Igor Golomstock states that Anthony Blunt "end[ed] his days peacefully, still a member of the Royal Academy and of King's College, Cambridge." Actually, Blunt, like the other Cambridge spies—Guy Burgess, Donald Maclean, and Kim Philby—attended Cambridge's Trinity College. And after his treason was publicly revealed and he had been stripped of his knighthood, Blunt resigned from the British Academy—just as a motion was passed to expel him. Interestingly, Noel Annan, then vice-chancellor of the University of London, reports in his book, *Our Age: English Intellectuals Between the World Wars*, that when he was asked to move that Blunt be deprived of the title of emeritus professor, he "refused on the ground that to do so would make Blunt into the kind of nonperson that the old-guard Communists in the Soviet Union became after Stalin liquidated them."

Mr. Golomstock's withering exposure of Blunt's professional incompetence in his chosen field of study, the art of Nicolas Poussin, should be a salutary corrective to his inflated scholarly status. Blunt deceived not only his country but his profession. How, one wonders, could fellow scholars persist in such willing suspension of disbelief for so long? One is used to the Old Boy Network as a protective shield for errant social and political conduct, but scarcely as a cover for spurious scholarship.

ANAND CHANDAVARKAR
Washington, D.C.

NATO

TO THE EDITOR:

Joshua Muravchik's article, "How to Wreck NATO" [April], describes in biased, unfair, and inaccurate terms the attitude of the Europeans and of France in particular.

Contrary to what Mr. Muravchik writes, the French word *hyperpuissance* does not have the same negative overtones as the English word "hyperpower." One need simply consult a dictionary to know this. The prefix *hyper* in French simply designates something that is very big (as in a *hypermarché*, which is bigger than a *supermarché*). When the French Foreign Minister refers in French to *l'hyperpuissance américaine*, he is making a perfectly objective and neutral observation—that the United States is the only country today with all the attributes of power (political, economic, cultural, military, etc.). There is nothing negative or critical in the phrase. Quite the contrary: the corresponding English is "sole remaining superpower."

Starting from this linguistic misunderstanding, Mr. Muravchik endeavors to present the French engagement in the Balkans in a light that is simply not supported by the facts. Does he not know that France was

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largely responsible for the NATO ultimatum in February 1994 against the Serb forces surrounding Sarajevo, an ultimatum that greatly contributed to NATO's involvement in the Balkans? Does he not know about the role played in the summer of 1995 by the Rapid Reaction Force—a force set up at President Jacques Chirac's initiative to reverse the balance of forces on the ground and open the way to the Dayton negotiations? Does he not know that France provided more than 100 aircraft to the NATO air campaign, making it the second largest contributor among the allies? Does he not know that France has committed 7,000 men to the peacekeeping force in Kosovo, making it again one of the main contributors?

Just as in the past, whenever the essential is at stake, whenever the values that underpin their civilization are threatened, France and the United States stand side by side in the front ranks to defend liberty and democracy. This is confirmed yet again by their common commitment in the Balkans.

FRANÇOIS DELATTRE
Director, Press and Information Service
Embassy of France
Washington, D.C.

JOSHUA MURAVCHIK writes:

Even if I were wrong about the meaning of the French prefix *hyper*, it would still be true that top-level French officials have expressed the goal of reducing American power. Consider their doleful references to American "hegemony" and the need to create a multipolar world to replace the present unipolar one. But I am not wrong about *hyper*. François Delattre suggests consulting a dictionary. I did, and my *Petit Robert* gives the following definition of *hyper*: "*Elément . . . qui exprime l'exagération, l'excès.*"

It surprises me that Mr. Delattre is not embarrassed to bring in Bosnia. In 1993, when the U.S. proposed air strikes and arming the Bosnians, France vigorously opposed both measures, and it even insisted on diluting diplomatic sanctions against Serbia (on the question of whether to deny it Yugoslavia's UN seat). NATO efforts to enforce the February 1994 ultimatum to which Mr. Delattre refers were thwarted by France's man at the UN, Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. This was done in the explicit hope (articulated by Boutros-Ghali's deputy on the scene, Yasushi Akashi) that the Bosnians would then surrender. It was not, as Mr. Delattre claims, the Rapid Reaction Force that changed the balance on the ground in Bosnia, but the successes of Croatian and Bosnian forces. Yet when the battered Bosnians managed to conduct their first successful offensive (in October 1994), French Foreign Minister Alain Juppé denounced their action, calling it "unacceptable." Most inexcusably, in July 1995, the French general who was serving as UN commander in the region, Bernard-Janvier, blocked air strikes against Serbian forces poised to overrun the UN-designated "safe area" of Srebrenica (where they went on to slaughter 5,000 to 10,000 prisoners). His reason, apparently, was that, in exchange for the release of French and British hostages, he had given his word to the Serbian military commander (and indicted war criminal) Ratko Mladic that there would be no air strikes.

Kosovo has been a different story. There, France and America have cooperated closely, as Mr. Delattre says. I would gladly embrace the rosy image he presents of French-American partnership. I only wish he could sell it to the French political class.

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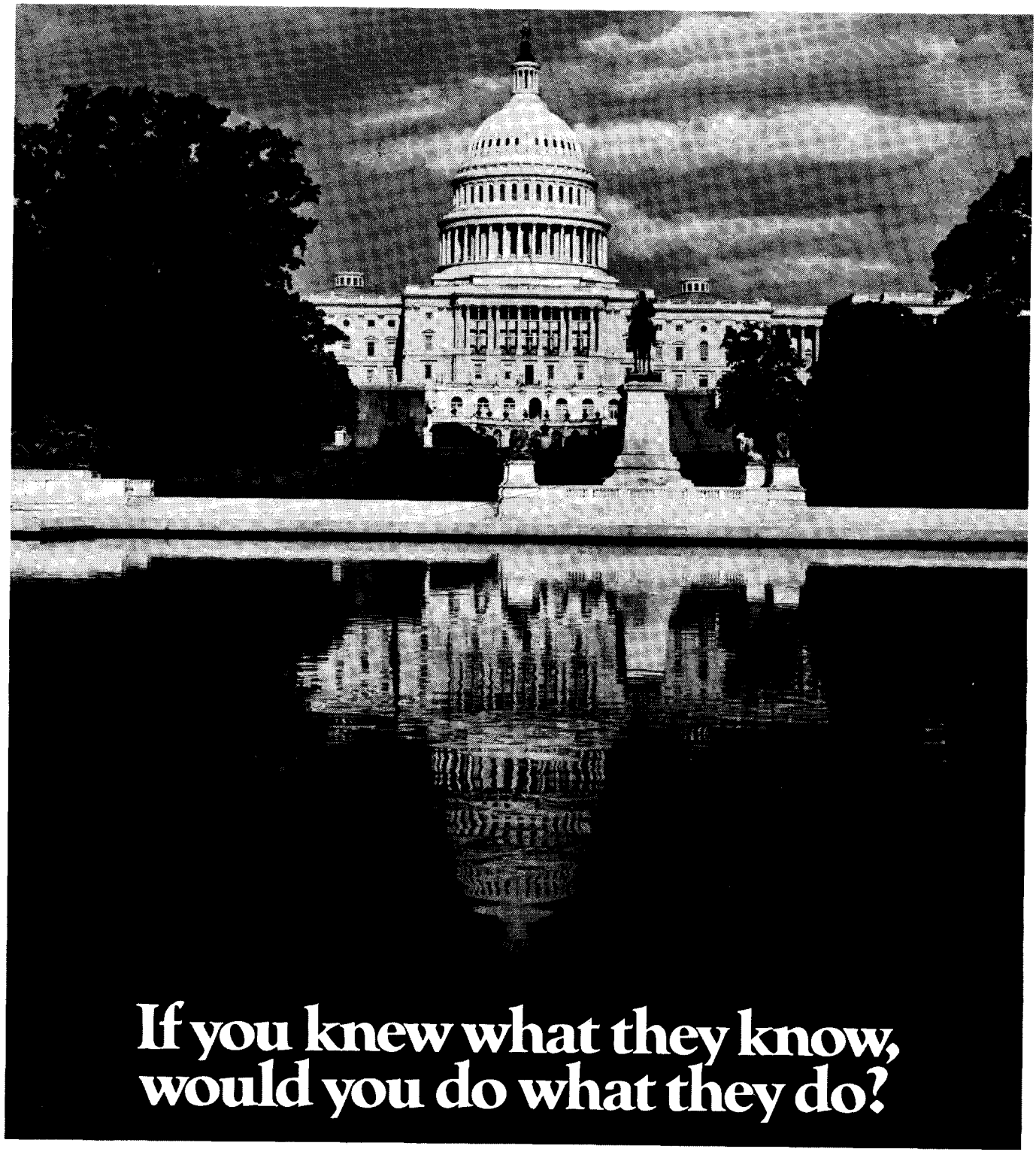

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Commentary
September 1999

"My Beautiful Old House" and Other Fabrications by Edward Said

Justus Reid Weiner

AMONG SPOKESMEN for the Palestinian cause in our day, surely none is so articulate, or so well-known, as Edward W. Said. The holder of an endowed chair in English and comparative literature at Columbia University, a prolific author of books and articles both scholarly and popular, a frequent lecturer and commentator on radio and television, a sometime diplomatic intermediary and congressional witness, the subject of countless profiles and interviews in the world media, Said—who was born in Jerusalem in 1935—has earned a reputation not only for polemical brilliance but, when it comes to championing Palestinian Arab rights (and assailing Israel for infringing them), a fierce moral zealotry that will not be assuaged.

The adulation in which Said is held by Palestinians themselves is suggested by a recent ceremony honoring him at the U.S.-based Palestinian Heritage Institute that was attended by 450 Arab diplomats and Arab-Americans, as by the overflow audience of 1,000 that gathered to hear him lecture last year in Bethlehem. But his prestige is no less high among American and European academics and intellectuals, who have extravagantly praised his literary scholarship and admire his uncompromising politics. As for the scholarship, his most famous book, *Orientalism* (1978), with its bold thesis that the Western study of Islam (and by extension other cultures) is itself a form of "colonialism," has had as profound and radicalizing an influence on literary studies in colleges and universities as it has had on Islamic self-perceptions. And as for politics, so stringent is Said's vision of the Middle East that in recent years he has changed from being a supporter of Yasir Arafat to a vociferous opponent, accusing the PLO chairman of having betrayed 50 years of Palestinian aspirations by signing the Oslo agreements with Israel.

The very model of an engaged academic, Said has been politically active since at least the late 1960's, when he co-founded the fervently pro-Palestinian Association of Arab-American University Graduates. In 1974, he was the principal author and translator of Arafat's notorious address to the UN General Assembly in which the PLO leader brandished both a gun and an olive branch; during the Carter years he transmitted overtures between Arafat and the administration, and in the Reagan years participated in the breakthrough meeting of a member of the Palestine National Council (PNC), the PLO's "parliament in exile," with Secretary of State George Shultz; and he himself served for many years as a member of the PNC. Said's books bearing directly on the Palestinian issue include *After the Last Sky: Palestinian*

JUSTUS REID WEINER, *here making his first appearance in* COMMENTARY, *is a scholar in residence at the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs who specializes in international law, and an adjunct lecturer at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv University.* *Copyright © 1999 by Justus Reid Weiner.*

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Lives (1986); *Blaming the Victims: Spurious Scholarship and the Palestine Question* (1988); *The Pen and the Sword* (1994); *The Politics of Dispossession: The Struggle for Palestinian Self-Determination* (1995); and *Peace and Its Discontents: Essays on Palestine in the Middle East Peace Process* (1996).

There can be no doubt that a great deal of the moral authority accruing to Edward Said derives as much from his personal as from his intellectual credentials.* As a living embodiment of the Palestinian cause, he has made much in print and on film of his birth, childhood, and schooling in Palestine, telling a story of idyllic beginnings and violent disruption—of a paradise lost—that resonates with personal pain while also serving as a powerfully compelling metaphor for the larger Palestinian condition. As Salman Rushdie put it in lauding Said's *After the Last Sky*, in writing about his "internal struggle: the anguish of living with displacement, with exile," Said "enables us to feel the pain of his people."

Both his personal pain and the pain he feels for his people are on especially vivid display in a 1998 BBC documentary that Said both wrote and narrated, *In Search of Palestine*. The film, aired around the world to mark the 50th anniversary of the Palestinian *nakbah* ("disaster") of 1948, and recently shown in New York on the local PBS affiliate, features extensive footage of Said standing outside his birthplace at what is now 10 Brenner Street in Jewish western Jerusalem.

But just the mention of that birthplace confronts us with a problem. Although Said has defined his own intellectual vocation as one of "tell[ing] the truth against extremely difficult odds"—he has sweepingly declared that the duty of the intellectual is "to speak the truth, as plainly, directly, and as honestly as possible"—it turns out that, in retailing the facts of his own personal biography over the years, he has spoken anything *but* the plain, direct, or honest truth. Instead, he has served up, and consciously encouraged others to serve up, a wildly distorted version of the truth, made up in equal parts of outright deception and of artful obfuscations carefully tailored to strengthen his wider ideological agenda—and in particular to promote the claims of Palestinian refugees against Israel.

For the past three years I have been looking into the core autobiographical assertions made by Said about his childhood in Palestine—a childhood that he has repeatedly asserted is central to the formation of his political thought and indeed of his emblematic political identity as a Palestinian refugee. My search, a fascinating adventure in itself, took me through sometimes obscure public records and archives in five countries on four continents and involved tracking down and interviewing numerous relatives, neighbors, school classmates, and professional colleagues. Virtually everything I learned, the principal conclusions of which are set out below, contradicts the story of Said's early life as Said has told it.†

To complicate matters still further, however, some time after completing the manuscript of this article, I learned of the forthcoming publication of another new book by Said, a memoir entitled *Out of Place* that is due to be released later this month.** Remarkably—but, as I shall have reason to speculate later, perhaps not surprisingly—this new book thoroughly revises the personal tale Said has been reciting all these years, bringing it into greater conformity with the truth while at the same time ignoring his 30 years of carefully crafted deception.

But I am getting ahead of myself. In order to untangle the strands of this enigma, we must begin by examining what has been the standard version of the life of Edward Said and see where and how it diverges from the facts.

II

FOR A characteristic rendition of the standard version, we need look no farther than a long and typically admiring feature article on Said that appeared almost exactly a year ago in the *New York Times* ("A Palestinian Confronts Time," by Janny Scott, September 19, 1998). Here is the relevant paragraph:

> Mr. Said was born in Jerusalem and spent the first twelve years of his life there, the eldest child and only son of a successful Palestinian Christian businessman. The family moved [elsewhere in this same *Times* piece, the word is "fled"] to Cairo in late 1947, five months before war broke out between Palestinian Arabs and Jews over plans to partition Palestine.

And here, from *Current Biography Yearbook* (1989),

* Both his scholarship and his grasp of political and cultural history have, in fact, been subjected to severe criticism, though this has hardly sufficed to undermine his reputation or to prevent his recent accession to the presidency of the prestigious Modern Language Association.

† Readers interested in the documentation for this article can find it at COMMENTARY's website, www.commentarymagazine.com, where I also list the many individuals to whom I am indebted for assistance.

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in a five-page profile personally approved by its subject, is a more expansive take:

> Edward W. Said was born in Jerusalem in what was then Palestine on November 1, 1935, the oldest child and only son of Wadie Said, a prosperous businessman. . . . The family lived in an exclusive section of West Jerusalem. . . . Baptized as an Episcopalian, Edward Said attended St. George's, an Anglican preparatory school, where his extracurricular activities included riding, boxing, gymnastics, and playing the piano.
>
> . . . At the age of twelve, Edward Said was forced to use a pass when traveling between his home and his school. "The situation was dangerous and inconvenient," he recalled . . . during an interview for *New York* magazine (January 23, 1989). In December 1947, the Said family left Jerusalem and settled in Cairo, Egypt. . . ."Israel was established; Palestine was destroyed," Said wrote in his book *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives*.

But why rely on the words of others? Both of these summaries merely recapitulate Said's own oft-recited outline of his early life:

> I was born, in November 1935, in Talbiya, then a mostly new and prosperous Arab quarter of Jerusalem. By the end of 1947, just months before Talbiya fell to Jewish forces, I'd left with my family for Cairo. . . . ["Palestine, Then and Now," *Harper's*, December 1992]
>
> I was born in Jerusalem and spent most of my formative years there and, after 1948, when my entire family became refugees, in Egypt. ["Between Worlds: Edward Said Makes Sense of His Life," *London Review of Books*, May 7, 1998]
>
> . . . my recollections of my early days in Palestine, my youth, the first twelve or thirteen years of my life before I left Palestine. [*The Pen and the Sword*]

This same rendering of his early years recurs over and over again in writings both by and about Said. (Thus, for example, the website of the *Nation*, a magazine with which he is affiliated as a music critic: "In 1948, Said and his family were dispossessed from Palestine and settled in Cairo.") It is what undergirds his self-definition as an archetypal "exile"—i.e., one who, *like his people in general*, was separated from his homeland in a sudden act of historic violence. Except for the detail of his birth, it is a tissue of falsehoods.

III

Here are the bare bones of the truth: Said's father Wadie (also known as William) grew up and went to school in Jerusalem but evidently emigrated in 1911 to the United States. During World War I, he reportedly served with American forces in Europe before returning to the Middle East with a U.S. passport to start what would become a very successful career in business. At least nine years prior to his son's birth in 1935, however, Wadie Said was already residing permanently in Cairo, Egypt. There, according to the 1926 French edition of the *Egyptian Directory*, he owned the Standard Stationery Company. The company prospered sufficiently to open a branch in Alexandria in 1929 and in due course a second store in Cairo itself.

It was to Cairo that Edward Said's mother Hilda (Musa), of Lebanese origin, moved upon marrying his father in 1932, and it was in Cairo that the nuclear family continued to reside over the ensuing decades in a series of ever more elegant and spacious apartments, the last three of which were located in Cairo's best neighborhood on the island of Zamalek in the Nile River. Documentation of their residences and other pertinent facts can be traced in decades' worth of consecutive annual editions of the *Egyptian Directory*, the Cairo telephone directory, *Who's Who in Egypt and the Middle East*, and other sources; a long-time family friend, Huda Gindy, a professor of English at Cairo University, has reminisced in an interview about her former neighbors, the Saids, who from 1940 lived upstairs from her at 1 El-Aziz Osman Street. By 1949, the capital of Standard Stationery was listed in the *Egyptian Trade Index* at the then very significant sum of 120,000 Egyptian pounds.

And Jerusalem? In that city lived Wadie Said's brother Boulos Yusef, his wife Nabiha, and their five children. To this branch of the family, as to other destinations, the affluent Cairo-based Saids made periodic visits. In November 1935, during one of those visits, Edward Said was born. On his birth certificate, prepared by the ministry of health of the British Mandate, his parents specified their permanent address as Cairo, and, indicating that they maintained no residence in Palestine, *left blank* the space for a local address. Similarly blank is the entry for a local address in the church record of Edward Said's baptism, an event that likewise took place in Jerusalem two years later. Of the 29 telephone and commercial directories for Jerusalem and Palestine from 1931 through 1948 that I was

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able to locate, more than half carry business and/or residential listings for Boulos Said and his wife. There are no listings for Edward Said's parents in any of the directories, whether in English, Hebrew, or Arabic.

IV

AS FOR the house in Talbieh (Talbiya), that is a story unto itself. In his article in *Harper's*, as in the much longer version of the same piece that he published in the (London) *Observer*, and as in other iterations of this theme elsewhere, Said has wrenchingly recounted the nostalgic visit he paid in early 1992 to his childhood roots in Jerusalem and in particular to this house at 10 Brenner Street. The *Observer* article was accompanied by a large photograph of the author perched on a stone wall with the caption: "Edward Said in front of his family's old home in Jerusalem."

Footage of Said and his son Wadie outside this same structure also features prominently in the BBC documentary, *In Search of Palestine*. Its deep symbolic significance was further underlined at the ceremonies honoring him at the Palestine Heritage Institute, at the end of which a painting of the house was presented to him as a gift. In an interview last March with the *Jerusalem Times*, an English-language Palestinian newspaper, Said had this to say:

> I feel even more depressed when I remember my beautiful old house surrounded by pine and orange trees in Al-Talbiyeh in east [*sic*, western] Jerusalem, which has been turned into a "Christian embassy." I went there a few days ago and took several photographs.

But wait. During his visit in 1992, according to Said, he was able to locate his "family's house" only because a cousin then living in Canada "had drawn me a map from memory that he sent along with a copy of the title deed." If that is so—if, that is, Said really had in hand a copy of the title deed to what he has described as "my beautiful old house"—then he could not have helped noticing the absence on it of his parents' names, his siblings' names, or his own name. For it never was, and is not now, their or his house.

In the ledgers kept at the Land Registry Office in Jerusalem during the Mandatory period, the earliest entry for the house in question is dated February 14, 1941. It records a transfer of fractional interests in the property from its registered owner, Yusef Said (Edward Said's grandfather), to Mrs. Boulos Yusef Said (Edward Said's aunt) and her five children. And that is all. There is no record of Edward Said's parents owning either the house or any interest in it.

IF HIS nuclear family had no ownership interest in the house at 10 Brenner Street, neither did he or they ever permanently reside in it. (Nor, apparently, did his aunt and cousins until 1942.) After being built in the early 1930's, the structure was initially divided into two apartments, each with a separate entrance from the outside; in 1942, a third apartment was created in the basement. From 1938 to 1946 (that is, from the time Edward Said was roughly three to the time he was eleven), the upstairs level was rented out to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia as its consulate general, and then from 1946 to 1952 to the successor government of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. It was used both for office space and for housing; during World War II, the exiled King Peter II lived in it for about six weeks.

Is it not curious in the extreme that Said, while on record as remembering the "rooms [in this house] where as a boy he read *Sherlock Holmes* and *Tarzan*, and where he and his mother read Shakespeare to each other," has nowhere brought to mind the presence upstairs of the Yugoslavian consulate, the comings and goings of visa-seekers, diplomats, and politicians, including for a time the king of Yugoslavia himself, or the arrival of limousines and their elegantly attired occupants for official functions like the annual Yugoslavian independence-day reception? On November 29, 1947, the very night the UN voted in favor of the partition plan for Palestine, and a couple of weeks before he has told us the Saids were forced to leave for Cairo, this reception was attended by no lesser figures than the British-appointed mayor of Jerusalem; Golda Meir, then director of the political department at the Jewish Agency; Hussein Haldi, the secretary of the Arab Higher Committee; and most of the city's social and political elite.

As for the downstairs, main-entrance level of the house, it was rented from about 1936 to 1938 by the Iranian consulate. Then, after 1938, this and the basement level were leased to the illustrious German-Jewish philosopher Martin Buber, his wife, and his two teenage granddaughters, all of them recent refugees from Nazi Germany. The Buber family was forced out of the house in early 1942 (when Edward Said would have been about seven) in a dispute with the owners—that is, Nabiha (Mrs. Boulos Yusef) Said—who broke the lease and reclaimed the premises for their personal use, winning a judge's ruling in favor of eviction.

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Buber's granddaughters, from whom I heard this account, also accurately remember the names of Nabiha Said and two of her boys, Yusef and Robert. Another tenant of the house during the latter Mandate period remembers George, still another son of the family. None remembers Edward or any of his four sisters.

Is it not curious, again, that Martin Buber's residence in this house should have gone unnoticed by Edward Said? Actually, that is not so; at least, not quite. In 1992, Said wrote of having heard, years earlier, "that Martin Buber had lived in the house for a time *after 1948*" (emphasis added). Last year, in a speech at Birzeit University on the West Bank, he amplified this thought with characteristic vehemence:

> The house from which my family departed in 1948—was displaced—was also the house in which the great Jewish philosopher Martin Buber lived for a while, and Buber of course was a great apostle of coexistence between Arabs and Jews, but he didn't mind living in an Arab house whose inhabitants had been displaced.

But the truth is the other way around: it was Said's aunt who evicted the Bubers, an event—surely a memorable one—that took place during the very period when Edward Said was allegedly growing up in the selfsame house, and long before Israel's war of independence in 1948. But there can be little wonder why neither that event, nor the presence in and subsequent removal from the building of Martin Buber's surely no less memorable library of some 15,000 books, has ever figured in his meticulous recollections of "my beautiful old house . . . in Al-Talbiyeh." The Bubers and their library were there. Said was not.

V

None of this, to be sure, is to gainsay the possibility or even the likelihood that, after 1942, when the Bubers had departed and Nabiha Said and her five children moved in, Edward Said's nuclear family may have stayed for brief periods with their cousins on the main entrance floor at 10 Brenner Street. By now, however, both families would have been quite large, while the apartment in question had a grand total of only four bedrooms. Assuming two were set aside for parents, this would have meant accommodating ten children in the remaining two bedrooms, without even taking into account the needs of grandparents or live-in servants, drivers, cooks, and the like. It is hard to imagine Wadie Said, accustomed as he was to spacious arrangements, enduring this for any great length of time.

And that brings us to another element in Said's reconstruction of his Jerusalem childhood: the question of his schooling.

According to the standard version, he attended St. George's Anglican preparatory school in eastern Jerusalem, "along with most of the male members of my family" (as he put it in his 1992 piece in *Harper's*). In the recent BBC documentary, Said is seen touring this school, which still exists. In the headmaster's office, where he turns the pages of an old, leather-bound student registry, he locates on camera the listing for a Jewish student named David Ezra, whom he says he remembers clearly. A vignette of David Ezra also turns up in Said's new memoir, *Out of Place*.

Interestingly, in this segment of *In Search of Palestine* we are not shown or told about any listing for Edward Said himself in the St. George's student registry. And for good reason: neither in the particular registry shown on camera nor in the school's other two old leather-bound registry books is there any record of his having attended this institution as he has claimed. Nor does David Ezra, who today goes by the name of David Eben-Ezra, have any recollection whatsoever of a classmate by the name of Edward Said—though in 1998 he was easily able to recall for me the names of nearly all his other classmates at St. George's. Not even the childhood movie footage of Edward Said that has been incorporated in the BBC documentary, not even old still photographs of his class, succeeded in jogging Eben-Ezra's otherwise quite remarkable powers of recall. He did comment, though, on Said's claim in the TV documentary that the two of them had sat together in the back of the classroom. Because of his poor eyesight, Eben-Ezra always sat in front.

None of this—again—is to gainsay the possibility of the young Said's having been now and then a temporary student at St. George's while on visits to his Jerusalem cousins. He might well have become aware of David Ezra and others in the school without having stayed long enough to enroll and have his own presence recorded in its official registry books. But so modest a possibility hardly fits what up to now has constituted the standard version of his life from birth until the age of twelve. To cite it one more time: "I was born in Jerusalem and spent most of my formative years there and, after 1948, when my entire family became refugees, in Egypt."

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VI

LET US look now at the latter part of that sentence: that is, at the circumstances of the Said family's departure as "refugees" from Jerusalem to Cairo, an event Said himself has repeatedly placed in mid-December 1947.

First, the standard version. In evoking the ominous atmosphere of those days, Said has cited the fact (duly recorded in his profile in *Current Biography Yearbook*) that even he, an innocent twelve-year-old schoolboy, had to produce a pass to traverse three British security zones between his home in Talbieh and his school, St. George's, in eastern Jerusalem. But what really caused his family to flee "in panic," he has recalled, was something far more menacing: in December, "a Jewish-forces sound truck warned Arabs to leave the neighborhood" (interview with Robert Marquand, *Christian Science Monitor*, May 27, 1997). In other words, the family's departure was a forcible one, a product of the incipient usurpation of the entire country, and the banishment of its indigenous Palestinian-Arab inhabitants, by the Zionists.

Neither of these claims withstands scrutiny.

If Said and his parents had in fact been living regularly in Palestine during the years prior to 1947, they would have become accustomed, as was every citizen of Jerusalem, to routinely producing identification and zone passes at the demand of British soldiers manning roadblocks—an inconvenience that was hardly "dangerous," as Said has termed it, but was, rather, designed to facilitate the search for fugitives or contraband weapons, to prevent violence between Arabs and Jews, and to protect British personnel. More to the point, at age twelve young Edward Said would hardly have been required to carry individual identification to and from school or at any other time; as David Eben-Ezra (along with several of his contemporaries) has attested, a St. George's uniform and/or a schoolbag with books would have been quite sufficient.

The matter of the "sound-truck" warning is a bit more complicated. Contemporary accounts indicate that relations between Jews and Arabs were, as it happens, quite good in the affluent and cosmopolitan neighborhood of Talbieh. (According to the then British mayor of Jerusalem, the area was "shared fairly evenly" between the two groups, though Said with his typical disregard for facts has asserted that its population was almost exclusively Arab.) In the five-and-a-half month period between the end of November 1947 and the middle of May 1948—that is, between the UN partition resolution and the establishment of the state of Israel—only two incidents of intercommunal violence marred Talbieh's calm.

In the first, on December 21, 1947, an Anglo-Jewish journalist for the *Palestine Post* was shot dead by Arabs. In the second, which occurred on February 11, 1948, a member of the Haganah, the indigenous Jewish defense force, was wounded by an Arab, and that same day, at the unauthorized behest of the Haganah sector commander, a sound van proceeded to drive through the area, warning Arabs to evacuate. According to the Hebrew newspaper *Ha'aretz* (February 12, 1948), the three Haganah men in the vehicle were promptly arrested by British police.

Some Arab residents of Talbieh apparently did pack up and go after this incident in February, but only temporarily, returning within a few days from nearby locales on the assurances of British police and clergy. The numbers could hardly have been large, since no mention of their flight appears in the leading Palestinian-Arab newspapers at the time. The permanent evacuation took place later, with the departure of British forces and the capture of Talbieh and the rest of southern Jerusalem by the Haganah. That occurred in mid-May, although the leading book on this subject by the Institute for Palestine Studies, a pro-PLO think tank, puts the date two weeks earlier, on April 30.

In any case, we are speaking of a period four and a half to five months *after* the time Said claims for a certainty the defining incident took place, and two and a half to three months after the mini-incident of mid-February. For what it is worth, the voluminous British documents from this period, including declassified security telegrams, make no mention of Palestinians leaving Talbieh, for any cause or reason, during the month of December 1947.

From these multiple internal inconsistencies and discrepancies from the historical record, one cannot avoid the reasonable conclusion that just as Edward Said and his nuclear family were not long-term or permanent residents in Talbieh in the 1930's and 1940's, so were they not resident there during the final months of the British Mandate. They thus cannot be considered "refugees" or "exiles" from Palestine in any meaningful sense of those two very weighty and politically charged terms.

VII

NOR, OF COURSE, did they arrive in Cairo for the first time in late 1947. For it was in Cairo that Edward Said in fact grew up and played with his childhood companions. It was in Cairo

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that he attended the Gezira Preparatory School, and in Cairo that he was enrolled, at the age of almost fourteen, at Victoria College. And it was from Cairo, in 1951, that he was finally sent by his father to complete his secondary education at the Mount Hermon school in Massachusetts.

As I indicated earlier, the history of the Said family's presence in Cairo can be traced through public records and the clear recollections of friends and neighbors. It has now also been confirmed by Said himself in his forthcoming memoir, *Out of Place*.* In this book, with its weirdly apposite title, the man who for decades has presented himself to the world as a professional refugee, who has powerfully described the traumatic effect on himself and his family of their sudden, panicked exile from the beloved city of his birth and childhood, who has harped repeatedly on the horrors of dispossession, of losing house and home, school, companions, and, in the case of his father, livelihood itself, sharply reverses course. Jerusalem, it turns out, was not the soul and center of Edward Said's youth, the place to which, as he averred in 1998, "nearly everything in my early life could be traced." Jerusalem was one of several family vacation spots. The center of its existence, from years prior to his birth until the early 1960's, was Cairo, Egypt.

If Said reverses course in this book, however, he does so silently, without acknowledging the bombshell disparity of his present account from his previous ones. Instead, he methodically camouflages and backfills, calmly giving us a "revised standard version" comprising hundreds of pages of family minutiae, all remembered 50 or 60 years later in picayune (and often boring) detail, not least when it comes to narrating the course of his budding if thwarted youthful sexuality and the humiliations he suffered at the hands of parents, classmates, and teachers. By this titillating means are we ourselves, no doubt, meant to be seduced into overlooking the egregious departures of his latest autobiography from the autobiography we have had delivered to us in segments over three decades of books, essays, lectures, interviews, and filmed reminiscences. Or perhaps the two are meant to chug along in our minds like a single locomotive on two parallel tracks, with neither version to be held to so old-fashioned a standard as the objective truth.

Why Said should have chosen this particular moment to release a revised standard version must remain a matter of speculation. For myself, I cannot rule out the possibility that the 85 interviews conducted over the course of my own three-year investigation, including many with persons known to him, may have alerted him to the urgency of retrieving from amnesia this amazingly full reconstruction of his Cairo childhood. If so, that very fullness, characterized by a near-photographic recall of everything from his parents' conversations to his adolescent wet dreams, might well be intended as a stay against skepticism; for how could anyone so candid ever have intended to conceal anything?

Whatever his motive, however, one thing this tireless paladin clearly does not intend to do is to permit a mere book, even one written by him, to interfere with his larger political agenda. That much, at least, was made perfectly clear in his BBC documentary, *In Search of Palestine*.

For in that film, standing with his son and a friend in front of 10 Brenner Street in Jerusalem, Said gesticulates at the house "my family owned" and, voice shaking with emotion, discusses the possibility of securing its rightful return from the Israeli authorities. Similarly, in an interview earlier this year, he reiterated his claim both to the house and to a business putatively owned by his father in Jerusalem, the Palestine Educational Company (a firm that "made office equipment and sold books").

> *Interviewer*: I was wondering, would you accept financial compensation from the Israeli government for these losses?
>
> *Edward Said*: You're damn straight.

And elsewhere: "I lost—and my family lost its property and rights in 1948." Compensation is owed for that property, he insists, as for all lost Palestinian property. "I've never believed in giving that up. If we lost it, then it has to be paid for by the Israelis."

Now, leave aside the plain fact that the war of 1948 was instigated not by Israel but by the Palestinian-Arab leadership, which launched hostilities against the Jewish inhabitants of Palestine after refusing to accept the UN partition resolution. Leave aside, too, the no less plain fact that over the course of the ensuing war, which saw every neighboring Arab nation rush in on the Palestinian side, not only did hundreds of thousands of (genuine) Palestinian refugees leave the Mandatory territory for various reasons, but many hundreds of thousands of Jews were simultaneously driven out of Arab

* To be completely fair, hints of the truth have also appeared in fugitive places over the years, including in a 1987 article by Said in, of all venues, *House & Garden*. My attempts to verify the record with Said himself were unsuccessful; a request for an interview, made through his assistant at Columbia, Zaineb Istrabadi, met with no response.

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countries, eastern Jerusalem, the Old City, and what later came to be known as the West Bank, and arrived in Israel traumatized and destitute. This alone suggests that if consideration is to be extended to the claims of some refugees, it must be extended to the claims of all.* But leave all that aside, and ask only this: why, if Edward Said has any legal basis for his assertion, has he not lifted a finger to secure the financial restitution due him?

It cannot be from ignorance of Israeli procedure. He has mentioned the actual filing process itself in one of his books (*After the Last Sky*), and, as he must know, that process is simplicity itself. All that is required is the completion of a two-page form that can be filled out in English, Hebrew, or Arabic. Claimants may file for themselves, or a lawyer may file on their behalf. There is no fee. In short, the risk is zero, while the gain could be substantial.

Perhaps little was to be hoped for, it is true, in connection with his father's alleged interest in the Palestine Educational Company. This store stood on Jaffa Street in an area looted and burned by Arab rioters in late 1947, heavily damaged by shell fire during the war of 1948-49, and remaining in no-man's-land between Jordanian and Israeli positions until Jerusalem was reunited by Israel in the Six-Day war of 1967; by that time, certainly, there could have been nothing left to salvage. But the house is another matter: according to the head of the most prominent real-estate agency in Israel, the building at 10 Brenner Street is worth, at the most conservative estimate, $1.8 million today. And, financial gain apart, think of the example an action of this kind on Said's part would set for his fellow Palestinians, and of the inestimable political value that would accrue from what would inevitably become a highly publicized and, to Israel, potentially quite embarrassing proceeding.

But there will of course be no filing, either for store or house. Even had the Palestine Educational Company been classified by Israel as absentee (rather than abandoned) property, it is unlikely that Wadie Said could have personally suffered financial loss from its destruction. Although I did find his name or initials in some listings for the store in local telephone books and (more pertinently) business directories, that was only prior to 1931; from 1931 onward, the solitary name listed is that of Boulos Yusef Said. Perhaps, then, for a few years after he moved permanently to Cairo in about 1926, Wadie Said retained some interest in the firm; anything beyond that seems highly unlikely. And as for the house at 10 Brenner Street, well, that is a subject we have already covered.

Still, I cannot leave this matter of "reparations," to use Edward Said's inflammatory term, without two final comments. The first is that, even if pride were to have prevented him from submitting a claim of any kind to an Israeli government office, he had ample opportunity, either by mail or during his several visits in the last years, to register with one or both of the Palestinian organizations that have undertaken to document such claims of ownership; as of 1998, neither had been contacted by him.

The second comment is this: whatever pecuniary losses the family of Wadie Said did or—more likely—did not suffer in Jerusalem in the late 1940's, they pale beside the devastating losses that befell him and them a few years later in Egypt. As the current manager of the Standard Stationery Company confirmed in an interview last year, and as Said now acknowledges in *Out of Place*, a revolutionary mob burned down Wadie Said's flagship Cairo store as well as a local branch store in 1952. Several years later, the successfully rebuilt business was nationalized in a purge of Western influence instituted by Egypt's president, the revolutionary dictator Gamal Abdel Nasser. (Wadie Said, it will be remembered, was a foreigner with an American passport.)

Yet, in contrast to the vigor with which Edward Said has spoken about his putative claims against Israel, he has been strangely silent concerning his family's very real and weighty losses of property in Egypt. One can readily imagine why. Not only would dwelling on those losses highlight the fact of his family's long-term residence in Cairo rather than Jerusalem, it might retroactively compromise Edward Said's own self-acknowledged enthusiasms as a onetime "Nasserite." Or perhaps he just knows that, unlike in Israel, where the rule of law holds sway, the prospects of recovering anything at all in Egypt are negligible to nil.

VIII

In his many narratives of his childhood in Palestine, Edward Said has painted the years before 1948 as a romantic idyll, in which life was simple, harmonious, and happy. This perfection was rudely destroyed by the outbreak of violence that preceded full-scale war in 1948-49, forcing him out of his "beautiful old house" into a 50-year exile that has been, for him, the "central metaphor" not only

* I have written in favor of an international tribunal to resolve the *documented* claims of Palestinian refugees ("The Palestinian Refugees' 'Right to Return' and the Peace Process," *Boston College International and Comparative Law Review*, vol. 20, no. 1, 1997).

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of his personal biography but of his very identity, and that drives his campaign for redress. For Edward Said in this scenario, now substitute the Palestinian people—as his readers and listeners are meant to do—and one begins to gain some apprehension of the myth-driven passions that have animated the revanchist program of so many Palestinian nationalists, whose expanding political ambitions often seem, even to sympathetic observers, permanently insusceptible of being satisfied through the normal processes of politics.

Edward Said is also an eminent scholar and literary figure, the author of a book entitled *Representations of the Intellectual* and of such uncompromising definitions of an intellectual's responsibility as the one I cited early on: "to speak the truth, as plainly, directly, and as honestly as possible." What are we to make of the fact that, in his own case, the plain, direct, and honest truth is so radically at odds with the parable of Palestinian identity he has been at such pains to construct over the decades? For, to say it one last time, he himself grew up not in Jerusalem but in Cairo, where his father, an American citizen, had moved as an economic expatriate approximately nine years before Edward's birth and had become the owner of a thriving business; and there, until his own departure for the United States as a teenager in 1951, the young Edward Said resided in luxurious apartments, attended private English schools, and played tennis at the exclusive Gezira Sporting Club as the child of one of its few Arab members.

Whatever we do finally make of all this, there can be no denying that the parable itself is a lie. An artful lie; a skillful lie; above all, a very useful and by now widely accepted lie—but a lie. As he continues the process of silently "spinning" this lie, a process now auspiciously launched in *Out of Place*, it will be especially interesting to see who among his legions of admirers, or among the friends of the Palestinian people, will notice or care. *That* is a question with reverberations far, far beyond the shifts and dodges and brazen misrepresentations of one prevaricating intellectual.

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The Moral Meaning of Genetic Technology

Leon R. Kass

WHEN, LESS than a half-century ago, James D. Watson and Francis Crick first revealed to the world the structure of DNA, no one imagined how rapidly genetic technology would develop. Within a few years, we shall see the completion of the Human Genome Project, disclosing the DNA sequences of all 100,000 human genes. And even without complete genomic knowledge, biotech business is booming: according to a recent report by the research director for Smith Kline Beecham, enough sequencing data are already available to keep his researchers busy for the next twenty years, developing early-detection screening techniques, rationally designed vaccines, genetically-engineered changes in malignant tumors leading to enhanced immune response, and, ultimately, precise gene therapy for specific diseases. In short, the age of genetic technology has arrived.

This technology comes into existence as part of the large humanitarian project to cure disease, prolong life, and alleviate suffering. As such, it occupies the moral high ground of compassionate healing. Who would not welcome surgery to correct the genetic defects that lead to sickle-cell anemia, Huntington's disease, and breast cancer, or to protect against the immune deficiency caused by the AIDS virus?

And yet genetic technology has also aroused considerable public concern. Even people duly impressed by the astonishing achievements of the last decades are nonetheless ambivalent about these new developments. For they sense that genetic technology, while in some respects continuous with the traditional medical project of compassionate healing, also represents something radically new and disquieting. For their own part, enthusiasts of this technology are often impatient with such disquiet, which they tend to attribute to scientific ignorance or else to outmoded moral and religious notions.

In my own view, the scientists' attempt to cast the debate as a battle of beneficent and knowledgeable cleverness versus ignorant and superstitious anxiety should be resisted. For the public is right to be ambivalent about genetic technology, and no amount of instruction in molecular biology and genetics should allay its—our—legitimate human concerns. In what follows, I mean to articulate some of those concerns, bearing in mind that genetic technology cannot be treated in isolation but must be seen in connection with other advances in reproductive and developmental biology, in neurobiology, and in the genetics of behavior—

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indeed, with all the techniques now and soon to be marshaled to intervene ever more directly and precisely into the bodies and minds of human beings. I shall proceed by raising a series of questions.

What Is Different About Genetic Technology?

At first glance, not much. Isolating a disease-inducing aberrant gene looks fairly continuous with isolating a disease-inducing intracellular virus; supplying diabetics with normal genes for producing insulin has the same medical goal as supplying them with insulin for injection.

Nevertheless, despite these obvious similarities, genetic technology is also decisively different. When fully developed, it will wield two powers not shared by ordinary medical practice. Medicine treats only existing individuals, and it treats them only remedially, seeking to correct deviations from a more or less stable norm of health. Genetic engineering, by contrast, will, first of all, deliberately make changes that are transmissible into succeeding generations and may even alter in advance specific *future* individuals through direct "germ-line" or embryo interventions. Secondly, genetic engineering may be able, through so-called genetic enhancement, to create new human capacities and hence new norms of health and fitness.

For the present, it is true, genetic technology is hailed primarily for its ability better to diagnose and treat disease in existing individuals. Confined to such practices, it would raise few questions (beyond the usual ones of safety and efficacy). Even intrauterine gene therapy for existing fetuses with diagnosable genetic disease could be seen as an extension of the growing field of fetal medicine. But there is no reason to believe that the use of gene-altering powers can be so confined, either in logic or in practice.

For one thing, "germ-line" gene therapy and manipulation, affecting not merely the unborn but also the unconceived, is surely in our future. The practice has numerous justifications, beginning with the desire to reverse the unintended dysgenic effects of modern medical success. Thanks to medicine, for example, individuals who would have died from diabetes now live long enough to transmit their disease-producing genes. Why, it has been argued, should we not reverse these unfortunate changes by deliberate intervention? More generally, why should we not effect precise genetic alteration in disease-carrying sperm or eggs or early embryos, in order to prevent in advance the emergence of disease that otherwise will later require expensive and burdensome treatment? Why should not parents eager to avoid either the birth of afflicted children or the trauma of eugenic abortion be able to avail themselves of such alteration?

In sum, before we have had more than trivial experience with gene therapy for existing individuals—none of it thus far successful—sober people have called for overturning the current (self-imposed) taboo on germ-line modification. The line between these two practices cannot hold.

Despite the naive hopes of many, neither will we be able to defend the boundary between therapy and genetic enhancement. Will we reject novel additions to the human genome that enable us to produce, internally, vitamins or amino acids we now must get in our diet? Will we oppose the insertion of engineered foreign (or even animal) genes fatal to bacteria and parasites or offering us increased resistance to cancer? Will we decline to make alterations in the immune system that will increase its efficacy or make it impervious to HIV? When genetic profiling becomes able to disclose the genetic contributions to height or memory or intelligence, will we deny prospective parents the right to enhance the potential of their children? Finally, should we discover—as no doubt we will—the genetic switches that control our biological clock, will we opt to keep our hands off the rate of aging or our natural human lifespan? Not a chance.

We thus face a paradox. On the one hand, genetic technology really *is* different. It can and will go to work directly and deliberately on our basic, heritable, life-shaping capacities, at their biological roots. It can take us beyond existing norms of health and healing—perhaps even alter fundamental features of human nature. On the other hand, precisely because the goals it will serve, at least to begin with, will be continuous with those of modern high-interventionist medicine, we will find its promise familiar and irresistible.

This paradox itself contributes to public disquiet: rightly perceiving a difference in genetic technology, we also sense that we are powerless to establish, on the basis of that difference, clear limits to its use. The genetic genie, first unbottled to treat disease, will go its own way, whether we like it or not.

How Much Genetic Self-knowledge Is Good for Us?

Quite apart from worries about genetic engineering, gaining genetic knowledge is itself a legitimate cause of anxiety, not least because of one of its most touted benefits—the genetic profiling of individuals.

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The deepest problem connected with learning your own genetic sins and unhealthy predispositions is neither the threat to confidentiality and privacy nor the risk of discrimination in employment or insurance, important though these issues may be. It is, rather, the various hazards and deformations in living your life that will attach to knowing in advance your likely or possible medical future. To be sure, in some cases such foreknowledge will be welcome, if it can lead to easy measures to prevent or treat the impending disorder, and if the disorder in question does not powerfully affect self-image or self-command. But will and should we welcome knowledge that we carry a predisposition to Alzheimer's disease, schizophrenia, or some other personality or behavior disorder, or genes that will definitely produce at an unknown future time a serious but untreatable disease?

Still harder will it be for most people to live easily or wisely with less certain information—say, where multigenic traits are involved or where the predictions are purely statistical, with no clear implication for any particular "predisposed" individual. The recent case of a father who insisted that ovariectomy and mastectomy be performed on his ten-year-old daughter because she happened to carry the BRCA-1 gene for breast cancer shows dramatically the toxic effect of genetic knowledge.

Less dramatic but more profound is the threat to human freedom and spontaneity, a subject explored 25 years ago by the philosopher Hans Jonas. In a discussion of human cloning, Jonas argued eloquently for a "right to ignorance":

> That there can be (and mostly is) too little knowledge has always been realized; that there can be too much of it stands suddenly before us in a blinding light. . . . The ethical command here entering the enlarged stage of our powers is: never to violate the right to that ignorance which is a condition for the possibility of authentic action; or: *to respect the right of each human life to find its own way and be a surprise to itself.* [Emphasis in the original]

To scientists convinced that their knowledge of predispositions can only lead to rational preventive medicine, Jonas's defense of ignorance will look like obscurantism. It is not. Although everyone remembers that Prometheus was the philanthropic god who gave to human beings fire and the arts, it is often forgotten that he also gave them the greater gift of "blind hopes," precisely because he knew that ignorance of one's own future fate was indispensable to aspiration and achievement. I suspect that many people, taking their bearings from life lived open-endedly rather than from preventive medicine practiced rationally, would prefer ignorance of the future to the scientific astrology of knowing their genetic profile. In a free society, that would be their right.

Or would it? This leads us to the next question.

What About Freedom?

EVEN PEOPLE who might otherwise welcome the growth of genetic knowledge and technology are worried about the coming power of geneticists, genetic engineers, and, in particular, governmental authorities armed with genetic technology.* Precisely because we have been taught by these very scientists that genes hold the secret of life, and that our genotype is our essence if not quite our destiny, we are made nervous by those whose expert knowledge and technique touch our very being. Even apart from any particular abuses or misuses of power, friends of human freedom have deep cause for concern.

The English humanist C. S. Lewis put the matter sharply in *The Abolition of Man* (1965):

> In reality, . . . if any one age really attains, by eugenics and scientific education, the power to make its descendants what it pleases, all men who live after it are the patients of that power. They are weaker, not stronger: for though we may have put wonderful machines in their hands we have preordained how they are to use them. . . . Man's conquest of Nature, if the dreams of some scientific planners are realized, means the rule of a few hundreds of men over billions upon billions of men. There neither is nor can be any simple increase of power on Man's side. Each new power won *by* man is a power *over* man as well. Each advance leaves him weaker as well as stronger. In every victory, besides being the general who triumphs, he is also the prisoner who follows the triumphal car.

Most genetic technologists will hardly recognize themselves in this portrait. Though they concede that abuses or misuses of power may occur, they see themselves not as predestinators but as facilitators, merely providing knowledge and technique that people can freely choose to use in making decisions about their health or reproductive choices. Genet-

* It is remarkable that most discussions of genetic technology naively neglect its potential usefulness in creating biological weapons, such as, to begin with, antibiotic-resistant plague bacteria, or later, aerosols containing cancer-inducing or mind-scrambling viruses.

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ic power, they will say, thus serves not to limit freedom but to increase it.

But as we can see from already existing practices like genetic screening and prenatal diagnosis, this claim is at best self-deceptive, at worst disingenuous. The choice to develop and practice genetic screening and the choices of which genes to target for testing have been made not by the public but by scientists—and not on liberty-enhancing but on eugenic grounds. In many cases, practitioners of prenatal diagnosis refuse to do fetal genetic screening in the absence of a prior commitment from the pregnant woman to abort any afflicted fetus. In other situations, pregnant women who still wish not to know prenatal facts must withstand strong medical pressures for testing.

While a small portion of the population may be sufficiently educated to participate knowingly and freely in genetic decisions, most people are and will no doubt always be subject to the benevolent tyranny of expertise. Every expert knows how easy it is to get most people to choose one way rather than another simply by the way one raises the questions, describes the prognosis, and presents the options. The preferences of counselors will always overtly or subtly shape the choices of the counseled.

In addition, economic pressures to contain health-care costs will almost certainly constrain free choice. Refusal to provide insurance coverage for this or that genetic disease may eventually work to compel genetic abortion or intervention. State-mandated screening already occurs for PKU (phenylketonuria) and other diseases, and full-blown genetic-screening programs loom large on the horizon. Once these arrive, there will likely be an upsurge of economic pressures to limit reproductive freedom. All this will be done, of course, in the name of the well-being of children.

Already in 1971, the geneticist Bentley Glass, in his presidential address to the American Association for the Advancement of Science, enunciated "the right of every child to be born with a sound physical and mental constitution, based on a sound genotype." Looking ahead to the reproductive and genetic technologies that are today rapidly arriving, Glass proclaimed: "No parents will in that future time have a right to burden society with a malformed or a mentally incompetent child." It remains to be seen to what extent such prophecies will be realized. But they surely provide sufficient and reasonable grounds for being concerned about restrictions on human freedom, even in the absence of overt coercion, and even in liberal polities like our own.

What About Human Dignity?

Here, rather than in the more talked-about fears about freedom, lie our deepest concerns. Genetic technology, the practices it will engender, and above all the scientific teachings about human life on which it rests are not, as many would have it, morally and humanly neutral. Regardless of how they are practiced and taught, they are pregnant with their own moral meaning, and will necessarily bring with them changes in our practices, our institutions, our norms, our beliefs, and our self-conception. It is, I submit, these challenges to our dignity and humanity that are at the bottom of our anxiety over genetic science and technology. Let me touch briefly on four aspects of this most serious matter.

• *"Playing God"*

This complaint is too facilely dismissed by scientists and nonbelievers. The concern has meaning, God or no God. By it is meant one or more of the following: man, or some men, are becoming creators of life, and indeed of individual living human beings (in-vitro fertilization, cloning); not only are they creating life, but they stand in judgment of each being's worthiness to live or die (genetic screening and abortion)—not on moral grounds, as is said of God's judgment, but on somatic and genetic ones; they also hold out the promise of salvation from our genetic sins and defects (gene therapy and genetic engineering).

Never mind the exaggeration that lurks in this conceit of man playing God: even at his most powerful, after all, man is capable only of *playing* God. Never mind the implicit innuendo that nobody has given to others this creative and judgmental authority, or the implicit retort that there is theological warrant for acting as God's co-creator in overcoming the ills and suffering of the world. Consider only that if scientists are seen in this godlike role of creator, judge, and savior, the rest of us must stand before them as supplicating, tainted creatures. That is worry enough.

Not long ago, at my own university, a physician making rounds with medical students stood over the bed of an intelligent, otherwise normal ten-year-old boy with spina bifida. "Were he to have been conceived today," the physician casually informed his entourage, "he would have been aborted." Determining who shall live and who shall die—on the basis of genetic merit—is a godlike power already wielded by genetic medicine. This power will only grow.

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• *Manufacture and Commodification*

BUT, ONE might reply, genetic technology also holds out the promise of a *cure* for these life-crippling and life-forfeiting disorders. Very well. But in order truly to practice their salvific power, genetic technologists will have to increase greatly their manipulations and interventions, well beyond merely screening and weeding out. True, in some cases genetic testing and risk-management to prevent disease may actually reduce the need for high-tech interventions aimed at cure. But in many other cases, ever greater genetic scrutiny will lead necessarily to ever more extensive manipulation. And, to produce Bentley Glass's healthy and well-endowed babies, let alone babies with the benefits of genetic enhancement, a new scientific obstetrics will be necessary, one that will come very close to turning human procreation into manufacture.

This process has already crudely begun with in-vitro fertilization. It will soon take giant steps forward with the ability to screen in-vitro embryos before implantation; with cloning; and, eventually, with precise genetic engineering. The road we are traveling leads all the way to the world of designer babies—reached not by dictatorial fiat but by the march of benevolent humanitarianism, and cheered on by an ambivalent citizenry that also dreads becoming simply the last of man's man-made things.

Make no mistake: the price to be paid for producing optimum or even only genetically sound babies will be the transfer of procreation from the home to the laboratory. Increasing control over the product can only be purchased by the increasing depersonalization of the entire process and its coincident transformation into manufacture. Such an arrangement will be profoundly dehumanizing, no matter how genetically good or healthy the resultant children. And let us not forget the powerful economic interests that will surely operate in this area; with their advent, the commodification of nascent human life will be unstoppable.

• *Standards, Norms, and Goals*

ACCORDING TO Genesis, God, in His creating, looked at His creatures and *saw* that they were *good*: intact, complete, well-working wholes, true to the spoken idea that guided their creation. What standards will guide the genetic engineers?

For the time being, one might answer, the norm of health. But even before the genetic enhancers join the party, the standard of health is being deconstructed. Are you healthy if, although you show no symptoms, you carry genes that will definitely produce Huntington's disease, or that predispose you to diabetes, breast cancer, or coronary artery disease? What if you carry, say, 40 percent of the genetic markers thought to be linked to the appearance of Alzheimer's? And what will "healthy" or "normal" mean when we discover your genetic propensities for alcoholism, drug abuse, pederasty, or violence? The idea of health progressively becomes at once both imperial and vague: medicalization of what have hitherto been mental or moral matters paradoxically brings with it the disappearance of any clear standard of health itself.

When genetic *enhancement* comes on the scene, standards of health, wholeness, or fitness will be needed more urgently than ever, but just then is when all pretense of standards will go out the window. "Enhancement" is a soft euphemism for "improvement," and the idea of improvement necessarily implies a good, a better, and perhaps even a best. If, however, we can no longer look to our previously unalterable human nature for a standard or norm of what is regarded as good or better, how will anyone know what constitutes an improvement? It will not do to assert that we can extrapolate from what we like about ourselves. Because memory is good, can we say how much more memory would be better? If sexual desire is good, how much more would be better? Life is good; but how much extension of life would be good for us? Only simplistic thinkers believe they can easily answer such questions.

More modest enhancers, like more modest genetic therapists and technologists, eschew grandiose goals. They are valetudinarians, not eugenicists. They pursue not some faraway positive good but the positive elimination of evils: disease, pain, suffering, the likelihood of death. But let us not be deceived. Hidden in all this avoidance of evil is nothing less than the quasi-messianic goal of a painless, suffering-free, and finally immortal existence. Only the presence of such a goal justifies the sweeping-aside of any opposition to the relentless march of medical science. Only such a goal gives trumping moral power to the principle, "cure disease, relieve suffering."

"Cloning human beings is unethical and dehumanizing, you say? Never mind: it will help us treat infertility, avoid genetic disease, and provide perfect materials for organ replacement." Such, indeed, was the tenor of the June 1997 report of the National Bioethics Advisory Commission on Cloning Human Beings. Notwithstanding its call for a

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temporary ban on the practice, the *only* moral objection the commission could agree upon was that cloning "is not safe to use in humans at this time" because the technique has yet to be perfected. Even this elite ethical body, in other words, was unable to muster any other moral argument sufficient to cause us to forgo the possible health benefits of cloning.

The same argument will inevitably also justify creating and growing human embryos for experimentation, revising the definition of death to facilitate organ transplantation, growing human body parts in the peritoneal cavities of animals, perfusing newly dead bodies as factories for useful biological substances, or reprogramming the human body and mind with genetic or neurobiological engineering. Who can sustain an objection if these practices will help us live longer and with less overt suffering?

It turns out that even the more modest biogenetic engineers, whether they know it or not, are in the immortality business, proceeding on the basis of a quasi-religious faith that all innovation is by definition progress, no matter what is sacrificed to attain it.

• *The Tragedy of Success*

What the enthusiasts do not see is that their utopian project will not eliminate suffering but merely shift it around. We are already witnessing a certain measure of public discontent as a paradoxical result of rising expectations in the health-care field: although their actual health has improved, people's *satisfaction* with their current health status has remained the same or declined. But that is hardly the highest cost of medical success.

As Aldous Huxley made clear in his prophetic *Brave New World*, the conquest of disease, aggression, pain, anxiety, suffering, and grief unavoidably comes at the price of homogenization, mediocrity, pacification, trivialized attachments, debasement of taste, and souls without love or longing. Like Midas, bioengineered man will be cursed to acquire precisely what he wished for, only to discover—painfully and too late—that what he wished for is not exactly what he wanted. Or, worse than Midas, he may be so dehumanized he will not even recognize that in aspiring to be perfect, he is no longer even truly human.

The point here is not the rightness or wrongness of this or that imagined scenario—all this is admittedly highly speculative. I surely have no way of knowing whether my worst fears will be realized, but you surely have no way of knowing that they will not. The point is rather the plausibility, even the wisdom, of thinking about genetic technology, like the entire technological venture, under the ancient and profound idea of tragedy. In tragedy, the hero's failure is embedded in his very success, his defeats in his victories, his miseries in his glory. What I am suggesting is that the technological way of approaching both the world and human life, a way deeply rooted in the human soul and spurred on by the utopian promises of modern thought and its scientific crusaders, may very well turn out to be inevitable, heroic, and doomed.

To say that technology, left to itself as a way of life, is doomed, does not yet mean that modern life—our life—*must* be tragic. Everything depends on whether the technological disposition is allowed to proceed to its self-augmenting limits, or whether it can be restricted and brought under intellectual, spiritual, moral, and political rule. But here, I regret to say, the news so far is not encouraging. For the relevant intellectual, spiritual, and moral resources of our society, the legacy of civilizing traditions painfully acquired and long preserved, are taking a beating—not least because they are being called into question by the findings of modern science itself. The technologies present troublesome ethical dilemmas, but the underlying scientific notions call into question the very foundations of our ethics.

This challenge goes far beyond the notorious case of evolution versus biblical religion. Is there *any* elevated view of human life and human goodness that is proof against the belief, trumpeted by contemporary biology's most public and prophetic voices, that man is just a collection of molecules, an accident on the stage of evolution, a freakish speck of mind in a mindless universe, fundamentally no different from other living—or even nonliving—things? What chance have our treasured ideas of freedom and dignity against the teachings of biological determinism in behavior, the reductive notion of the "selfish gene" (or for that matter of "genes for altruism"), the belief that DNA is the essence of life, and the credo that the only natural concerns of living beings are survival and reproductive success?

In 1997, the luminaries of the International Academy of Humanism—including the biologists Francis Crick, Richard Dawkins, and E.O. Wilson and the humanists Isaiah Berlin, W. V. Quine, and Kurt Vonnegut—issued a statement in defense of cloning research in higher mammals and human beings. Their reasons were revealing:

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> What moral issues would human cloning raise? Some world religions teach that human beings are fundamentally different from other mammals—that humans have been imbued by a deity with immortal souls, giving them a value that cannot be compared to that of other living things. Human nature is held to be unique and sacred. Scientific advances which pose a perceived risk of altering this "nature" are angrily opposed. . . . As far as the scientific enterprise can determine, [however] . . . [h]uman capabilities appear to differ in degree, not in kind, from those found among the higher animals. Humanity's rich repertoire of thoughts, feelings, aspirations, and hopes seems to arise from electrochemical brain processes, not from an immaterial soul that operates in ways no instrument can discover. . . . Views of human nature rooted in humanity's tribal past ought not to be our primary criterion for making moral decisions about cloning. . . . The potential benefits of cloning may be so immense that it would be a tragedy if ancient theological scruples should lead to a Luddite rejection of cloning.

In order to justify ongoing research, these intellectuals were willing to shed not only traditional religious views but *any* view of human distinctiveness and special dignity, their own included. They fail to see that the scientific view of man they celebrate does more than insult our vanity. It undermines our self-conception as free, thoughtful, responsible beings, worthy of respect because we alone among the animals have minds and hearts that aim far higher than the mere perpetuation of our genes. It undermines, as well, the beliefs that sustain our mores, institutions, and practices—including the practice of science itself. For why, on this radically reductive understanding of "the rich repertoire" of human thought, should anyone choose to accept as true the results of *these* men's "electrochemical brain processes," rather than his own? Thus do truth and error themselves, no less than freedom and dignity, become empty notions when the soul is reduced to chemicals.

THERE IS, of course, nothing novel about reductionism, materialism, and determinism of the kind displayed here; they are doctrines with which Socrates contended long ago. What is new is that, as philosophies, they seem to be vindicated by scientific advance. Here, in consequence, is the most pernicious result of our technological progress—more dehumanizing than any actual manipulation or technique, present or future: the erosion, perhaps the final erosion, of the idea of man as noble, dignified, precious, or godlike, and its replacement with a view of man, no less than of nature, as mere raw material for manipulation and homogenization.

Hence our peculiar moral crisis: we adhere more and more to a view of human life that gives us enormous power and that, *at the same time*, denies every possibility of nonarbitrary standards for guiding the use of this power. Though well-equipped, we know not who we are or where we are going. We triumph over nature's unpredictabilities only to subject ourselves, tragically, to the still greater unpredictability of our capricious wills and our fickle opinions. That we do not recognize our predicament is itself a tribute to the depth of our infatuation with scientific progress and our naive faith in the sufficiency of our humanitarian impulses.

DOES THIS mean that I am therefore in favor of ignorance, suffering, and death? Of killing the goose of genetic technology even before she lays her golden eggs? Surely not. But unless we mobilize the courage to look foursquare at the full human meaning of our new enterprise in biogenetic technology and engineering, we are doomed to become its creatures if not its slaves. Important though it is to set a moral boundary here, devise a regulation there, hoping to decrease the damage caused by this or that little rivulet, it is even more important to be sober about the true nature and meaning of the flood itself.

That our exuberant new biologists and their technological minions might be persuaded of this is, to say the least, highly unlikely. But it is not too late for the rest of us to become aware of the dangers—not just to privacy or insurability, but to our very humanity. So aware, we might be better able to defend the increasingly beleaguered vestiges and principles of our human dignity, even as we continue to reap the considerable benefits that genetic technology will inevitably provide.

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Reds

Joshua Muravchik

It was a surprise to many when the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences announced early this year that it would bestow a lifetime-achievement award on the director Elia Kazan. The only thing predictable was that a storm of protest would ensue. Kazan, after all, had chosen to name the names of members of the Communist party (CP or CPUSA) when he was called before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) in 1952. Ever since, and despite his many brilliant films, he had been treated as a pariah by much of Hollywood.

At the award ceremony itself, when the eighty-nine-year-old Kazan was finally handed his special Oscar, some of the assembled glitterati, led by the actor Richard Dreyfuss, expressed their outrage by ostentatiously declining to stand or to applaud. Outside the hall marched a large crowd bearing signs like "Elia Kazan: Snitch" and "Elia Kazan: Benedict Arnold." There was also a group of counter-demonstrators, quite a bit smaller, whose spokesman gamely hailed the director as a "moral giant."

Ten years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the cold war, it would appear, is still alive on the home front. Nor is the skirmish over Kazan the only sign of combat. Quite the contrary: in the past year alone, newspapers, magazines, and books, have brought us a whole series of controversies and debates not just about Communism but, especially, about the nature of the foothold it did or did not establish in the United States. Although positions on the major questions have shifted a bit from where they were twenty or ten years ago, the territory is still under dispute, and some of the old battle lines remain surprisingly visible.

Back in the 1930's and 40's, when the Soviet Union was still vigorous and growing, attitudes toward the workers' state on the part of politically engaged Americans tended to fall into three camps. There were, first of all, the admirers, many of whom took the step of formally joining the Communist party while others expressed their sympathies in different ways, participating in organizations aligned with the party or generally making their voices heard as "fellow travelers." Standing against the admirers at the opposite end of the spectrum were the anti-Communists, who understood that even as Stalin invoked the new and better world being built in the Soviet homeland, he was in the process of murdering millions of his countrymen and immiserating the rest. This camp, which encompassed a broad political range, included a fair number of intellectuals on the Left, some of whom had themselves formerly been members of the CP but, having become disenchanted and disillusioned, now dedicated themselves to fighting it by every means.

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In between the pro-Communists and the anti-Communists was the great uncommitted middle, composed of those, primarily liberals, in whom the Soviet Union inspired neither fierce adulation nor fierce hatred but who strove in their own minds to balance Communism's failures with what they were convinced were its successes. Throughout the decades, pro-Communists and anti-Communists fought to gain the allegiance of this center.

Ironically, the pro-Soviet camp in the United States was at its apogee during the Soviet regime's bloodiest days, when the purges of the 1930's were filling up the concentration camps and millions were being starved to death in a man-made famine. Only in the late 1940's and early 1950's, as the USSR subjugated Eastern Europe and detonated first an atomic and then a hydrogen bomb, and as Communists seized power in China and launched a war in Korea, did the anti-Communists in America gain the upper hand, and then only in the political arena (the cultural realm remained largely under the influence of the Communists and their epigones and fellow travelers). They were aided by revelations that America's atomic-bomb secrets had been stolen by Soviet spies, and that high-ranking officials in Washington had harbored covert loyalty to the Kremlin even as they were helping to shape U.S. policy.

As new laws were passed to tighten security, and both executive and legislative bodies initiated investigations into charges of treachery, the response of the pro-Soviet camp was twofold. First, it threw up a stone wall of denial. Registered Communists denied membership in the party, while the party itself scoffed at the idea that it or any of its members had ever engaged in espionage. The so-called "Hollywood Ten"—a group of prominent figures in the entertainment industry, nine party members and one fellow traveler—went to jail for contempt of Congress rather than testify before HUAC. Numerous witnesses invoked their Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination and refused to answer questions about their own political affiliations and activities.

Alger Hiss, a high-ranking State Department official accused of espionage, denied the charge, denied he was a Communist, and denied he had known his accuser, Whittaker Chambers. In 1950, he went to jail for perjury—and came out still denying all. Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, convicted of passing atomic secrets to the USSR, went to the electric chair, leaving their two young sons orphans rather than admit to what they had done. Others fled the country: scores went to Mexico, still others to the Soviet Union or Czechoslovakia. Even in exile, most of them continued denying.

BUT DENIAL was only one half of the Communist strategy; the other half was to claim victimization at the hands of a proto-fascist campaign, spearheaded by Senator Joseph McCarthy, to suppress dissent or to injure Jews, other minorities, and the foreign-born. This was not an unwise or ineffective move. If, as the leftist historian David Caute has written, "the pro-Communist Left began to scream 'Fascism!' at the first subpoena," it found its perfect foil in the demagogic McCarthy, who, even as he tapped into a rising national fear, had neither the wit to keep his facts straight nor the sobriety or scruple to care. By the time McCarthy's antics finally ended in his censure by the Senate in 1954, he had managed to create the impression that anti-Communism itself was nothing but a pastiche of false and flimsy charges in the service of a reactionary politics.

Indeed, thanks in no small measure to McCarthy, the American Communist movement was on its way to riding out the "Red Scare" of the 1950's when it was left reeling by a blow delivered by none other than Stalin's successor, Nikita Khrushchev. In 1956, at the 20th congress of the Soviet Communist party, Khrushchev launched an electrifying reassessment of Stalin. Overnight, the man who had ruled the Communist universe for three decades was "demoted," in the sardonic words of one American radical, "from the office of greatest, wisest, and most adored leader in recorded history to the lesser office of maniacal mass-murderer." The impact on American Communism was devastating, and party members, overcome by confusion and doubt, quietly left in droves.

With the party on the wane, and with the Kremlin continuing to provide periodic displays of its brutal nature (invading Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, Afghanistan in 1979), Communism in the U.S. steadily declined until it all but disappeared. But to say that Communism itself declined is not to say that pro-Communist sentiment also declined. Starting in the 60's, the ardor that once attached itself to the Soviet Union found new objects of desire in Communist China, Castro's Cuba, Ho Chi Minh's North Vietnam, Nicaragua under the Sandinistas, and a host of other experiments in compulsory utopianism. In many quarters of American intellectual life, moreover, a phenomenon emerged that came to be known as anti-anti-Communism: the view that anti-Communism was a scourge almost as great as Communism itself, and

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that all talk of Communist perfidy or subversion was part and parcel of a McCarthyite "witch hunt." Today, this view remains deeply entrenched, if not dominant, in the social-science and humanities departments of many of the nation's universities.

Still, the wheel has also begun to turn. Just as Khrushchev's revelations shook the American Communist movement to its core, so the collapse of the Soviet Union has, over the past decade, shaken some of the basic premises of anti-anti-Communism. The opening of the Soviet archives has permitted scholars in both Russia and the West to document the crimes of the Soviet Communists in all their horrific detail. And these same archives have also confirmed two other facts long denied: first, that Communist parties around the world, including in the United States, were not independent movements but wholly under the dictatorial control of the Kremlin; and, second, that Communist subversion in the United states was no figment of the McCarthyite imagination.

How this news has been met on the American Left is another matter.

ESPIONAGE IS the issue that has received the most attention lately, thanks to the Venona files. These are some 3,000 highly secret communications between Moscow and Soviet agents operating in the U.S. that in the 1940's were intercepted and decoded by the National Security Agency. The facts contained in this trove of documents have now been brought before us in all their stark detail by two indefatigable scholars, John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr.[1] They are impossible to dismiss.

Consider, for example, the light the Venona files shed on the Alger Hiss affair, the most controversial espionage case in American history. Even among those who have long conceded that Hiss was a Soviet spy, there has been considerable dispute over just how long he served his masters in the Kremlin. His principal accuser, Whittaker Chambers, had left the Communist underground in 1938, and it seemed plausible to some that Hiss ceased his own activities shortly thereafter, possibly following the Stalin-Hitler pact of 1939.

Not so, the Venona documents demonstrate: Hiss remained an active conduit to Moscow throughout the war. From a cable bearing a 1945 date, we learn that this high-ranking American diplomat (referred to by his code-name Ales) had been feeding information to Soviet military intelligence (GRU) "continuously since 1935." We also get a glimpse of how much the Kremlin valued Hiss from the information that he and a small group of fellow spies organized by him all received decorations from the GRU. When Hiss visited Moscow as a member of a State Department delegation, the deputy foreign minister took the trouble and risk of contacting him directly to express again the GRU's gratitude.

Julius Rosenberg, to take another notorious example, emerges from the Venona documents as even more active than was previously thought. Over many years, the intercepts show, he ran a network of a dozen agents—most of whom he either recruited directly or helped to recruit—that methodically delivered atomic secrets and other highly sensitive military-technical information to the USSR. In Rosenberg, wrote one Soviet case officer, "we have a man devoted to us, whom we can trust completely, . . . a capable agent who knows how to work with people and has solid experience in recruiting new agents."

The Venona files also shed light on cases that have received far less attention than Hiss and Rosenberg. For nearly a decade, for example, a man named Laurence Duggan headed the Latin America division of the State Department; in 1948, immediately after being interviewed by the FBI about his contacts with the Soviet Union, he threw himself out a window to his death. After his suicide, many influential American liberals, including Eleanor Roosevelt, Edward R. Murrow, and the Attorney General Tom Clark, expressed complete confidence in Duggan's probity, and so have many others since.

In an earlier book, *The Secret World of American Communism*, Harvey Klehr and John Earl Haynes referred to Duggan as a "Communist source . . . in the State Department," a phrase for which they and their publisher were severely reproached in the *New Republic* by the historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. But the Venona decrypts conclusively resolve the issue (as Schlesinger has conceded): Duggan was indeed illegally passing information to the Russians.

Not only were many individual Communists engaged in espionage, but the American Communist party as an institution turns out to have been much more directly involved than previously suspected. Take the case of Earl Browder, the leader of the CP from 1930 until 1945. Browder has long enjoyed the image of a moderate, in part because he was expelled from the party by Stalin himself in a leftward shift after World War II. The Venona intercepts make clear, however, that throughout his tenure in party office, Browder was orchestrating

[1] *Venona: Decoding Soviet Espionage in America*. Yale University Press, 487 pp., $30.00.

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espionage operations on behalf of the USSR. And not only was Browder himself "an eager and productive" agent, according to a new analysis of Soviet intelligence archives by Allen Weinstein and Alexander Vassiliev,[2] but his wife was also an agent, and so were his brother and his brother's wife.

Seven years ago, on the basis of exhaustive research, Klehr and Haynes concluded that "few American Communists were spies," and that "espionage was not a regular activity of the American CP." Today, they write, this assessment can no longer stand:

> As our computers . . . printed out the names, not of "few," but of hundreds of American Communists who abetted Soviet espionage in the United States; as we read the deciphered messages showing that regional CPUSA officials, members of the party's most powerful body, the Politburo, and the party chief himself knowingly and purposely assisted Soviet spies, it became clear that espionage was a regular activity of the American Communist party.

WHAT, THEN, has been the effect of these revelations on liberal and left-wing opinion in the United States? In some cases, what can no longer be denied has in fact been acknowledged. Thus, to the columnist Nicholas von Hoffman, the new disclosures show that "point by point Joe McCarthy got it all wrong and yet was still closer to the truth than those who ridiculed him." Echoing von Hoffman, Andrew Sullivan, the former editor of the *New Republic*, finds that "McCarthy, for all his unpardonable excesses, was mainly right about the extent of Communist influence." And the columnist Garry Wills (who twenty years ago wrote a fawning introduction to *Scoundrel Time*, Lillian Hellman's meretricious account of her confrontation with HUAC) has chastised his fellow liberals who still cling to their faith in the innocence of Hiss and Rosenberg.[3]

Still, if a shift is under way, it is not yet a decisive one. Not only do the heirs of the old hard Left, from the editors of the *Nation* to revisionist historians, continue to glorify the "achievements" of American Communism, but even those willing to entertain seriously the gravamen of recent disclosures insist on qualifying what it means for their understanding of the past. For example, the historian Maurice Isserman has admitted that his views regarding the involvement of American Communists in Soviet espionage "have changed dramatically"; he no longer doubts the guilt of Hiss or Rosenberg. But the key fact on which to focus, Isserman now maintains, is that only a trifling fraction—300 out of some 50,000 party members—have been shown to be spies. And in any case, what induced them to cross the line "from sharing sympathies to sharing secrets with the Soviets" was a genuine threat—namely, the rise of European fascism. Thus, says Isserman, nothing in the new revelations shakes his previous argument that American Communists were not mere puppets of Moscow but rather something far more complex: "human beings who held and discarded illusions, learned some lessons from their mistakes, and failed to learn others."

A similar line has been taken by Ellen Schrecker, the author of a recent revisionist history of the McCarthy era.[4] To her, the new evidence suggests only that, while the Communist party's top tier may have obediently followed Moscow's bidding, at the middle and lower levels the party retained its character as a "progressive" and autonomous social movement. Moreover, if the party had a penchant for secrecy, this was only natural in light of the persecution it faced in America. Finally, to the extent that members of the party engaged in spying, they did little harm. "Were these activities so awful?" Schrecker asks. Did they justify the establishment of the "politically repressive security system" that we came to have in the United States?

SUCH ARGUMENTS, whatever else one might say about them, attest to the remarkable power of cherished dogma to withstand the assault of facts.

A few such facts are these. To begin with, all ranks of the Communist party were equally slavish in their devotion to the Kremlin throughout the Soviet era, as is amply demonstrated by the zigs and zags cut by the party whenever the Kremlin changed its line. Without a peep of dissent from the ranks, the CP obediently followed where Stalin led it, even when he led it in a direction 180 degrees opposite to the previous year's. And if the party's behavior in general gives the lie to any notion that it represented an independent political force, its behavior in the par-

[2] *The Haunted Wood: Soviet Espionage in America—the Stalin Era*. Random House, 401 pp., $30.00.

[3] The new climate may explain why *The View from Alger's Window* (Knopf, 256 pp., $24.00), a recent, loving portrait of Alger Hiss by his son Tony, has met with a decidedly cool reception. Lance Morrow's review in *Time* was typical: Tony Hiss, Morrow wrote, "makes a case for his father's innocence . . . so heartbreakingly sweet that one struggles (though unsuccessfully) to join in the son's self-deception."

[4] *Many Are the Crimes* (Little, Brown, 1998), reviewed by James Nuechterlein in the June 1998 COMMENTARY.

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ticular period surrounding World War II shows beyond a shadow of doubt that anti-fascism could hardly have been a primary motive for people joining the cause: many Communists spent those critical years following orders from Moscow that had the practical effect of helping fascism to thrive, and that even directed the party to proclaim its relative indifference to fascism as just another form of capitalism.

Nor does Maurice Isserman's acknowledgment of Communist espionage go nearly far enough. For one thing, the number of known Communist spies is undoubtedly higher than 300—though even 300 agents in key positions would make for a network of extraordinary potency. For another thing, the Venona documents cover only a year-and-a-half of intercepted communications, and there were certainly many others who had left the fold before then or who joined it later.

In any case, a much more telling fact is that there is no record of any American Communist ever refusing a request to spy and reporting it to law-enforcement authorities or publicly denouncing it. One cannot plausibly hold that party members were unaware of what was going on. Just as the Venona documents show that CP officials were orchestrating the espionage, so they record that the majority of individuals being recruited to do the dirty work were rank-and-file members. Thousands of other members must have noticed that comrades from their own units were slipping away without fanfare as they entered the underground apparatus.

But perhaps the most outrageous distortion of all is the idea that Communist espionage did little or no harm. Spies recruited from within the American CP made it possible for the Soviet Union to obtain atomic weapons years earlier than would otherwise have been the case. This alone—and it was hardly the only Soviet espionage coup—greatly heightened the terrors and human costs of the cold war, enabling Stalin to pursue a far more aggressive policy in Europe and in Asia. His authorization of North Korea's invasion of the South, a conflict in which tens of thousands of Americans and a great many more Koreans died, may have owed its origins in part to the atomic espionage successfully conducted by members of the American Communist party.

So, despite their "illusions" and their "mistakes," were the Communists basically fine, well-intentioned people, as the last-ditch line of defense of the apologists would have it? One can freely posit that some of them must have been. But *Red Diapers*,[5] a new anthology of reminiscences by children of party members, casts doubt on that, too. A considerable number of these now-adult children recount lonely and unhappy lives in the company of parents who thought first, last, and always of their obligations to the party. A startling number also recall being terrified for years that their mothers and fathers would be taken from them by the police, put on trial, and executed in the electric chair. For their parents had shared with them the lie that Julius and Ethel Rosenberg had been framed merely for their idealistic political convictions.

IN THE end, why so many people clung so persistently and for so long to such a false and murderous god is something of a mystery. But if the Communist mentality remains difficult to comprehend, the nature of the Communist party and the role it played in American life are coming into ever clearer focus, at least for those willing to look. As Klehr and Haynes sum it up:

> [T]o say that the CPUSA was nothing but a Soviet fifth column in the cold war would be an exaggeration; . . . the CPUSA's chief task was the promotion of Communism and the interests of the Soviet Union through political means. But it is equally true that the CPUSA was indeed a fifth column working inside and against the United States in the cold war.

Which brings us back to the protesters who refused to applaud or who picketed Elia Kazan at the Academy Awards. Far from being the "Benedict Arnold" that he has been labeled by today's anti-anti-Communists, Kazan was a patriot, and his decision to name those who stood ready to betray the United States was both courageous and morally unimpeachable. In a newspaper advertisement he took out shortly after testifying to HUAC, Kazan called Communism a "dangerous and alien conspiracy." This was on the mark back then, and, as a retrospective verdict on that dark period, its truth has been reinforced by every new fact that has come to light since the end of the cold war. If we cannot get straight the rights and wrongs of the struggle between Communism and anti-Communism, itself perhaps the greatest moral struggle of this century, then it is hard to see what other issues we will ever be able to address intelligently.

[5] Edited by Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro. University of Illinois Press, 320 pp., $49.95 cloth, $19.95 paper.

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In Defense of German Jews

Jay M. Harris

German Jews: the very words evoke a highly specific and, for the most part, negative image. From their notoriously defective political judgment to their absurd sense of bourgeois rectitude to their penchant for arriving on time, German Jews exist in the mind as two-dimensional figures, their story one of all-but-predetermined doom. Foolishly, tragically, German Jews in the late 19th and early 20th centuries set themselves (it is said) on a trajectory that led inevitably to *Kristallnacht* and beyond. Their blind pursuit of German citizenship, of a place in German society, required on the one hand a denial of their Jewish distinctiveness, on the other hand a wild misreading of Germany itself. Their love affair with German high culture was fated to be unrequited: the more saliently Jews emerged as intellectuals, artists, journalists, and critics, as theater- and opera- and concert-goers, the more violently were they resented by their fellow Germans. Their inability to understand or to respond effectively to this fact is but a further mark of their hopeless naiveté.

It was, perhaps, the Zionists who first drew this portrait of German Jewry as classic exemplars of Jewish political ingenuousness. But variants of the Zionist analysis have by now become a kind of conventional wisdom throughout the American Jewish community. Thus, for leaders of some secular organizations, the German experience suggests what can happen when a self-effacing group is too fearful of challenging the powers-that-be on fundamental issues of self-interest: although German Jews did fight for their civil rights, they declined to challenge degrading demands that they "earn" those rights, and this submissive attitude led, it is held, to the incapacity to combat Nazism or even to encourage migration. Religious traditionalists, for their part, lament the too-eager readiness of German Jews to subordinate their Judaism to their political and cultural aspirations: trying ever more desperately to convince their hosts that they were worthy of civic and cultural integration, they denuded their own traditions of everything particular to them, thereby failing to retain their own faithful, who increasingly abandoned the synagogue, while simultaneously failing to assuage the suspicions of the German majority.

As with all self-serving interpretations of the past, there is some measure of truth in this reading of history. Most German Jews in the 19th century did try to drop the ethnic component of traditional Jewish identity in a quest to be fully accepted by the German state; many Jewish leaders failed to combat the nationalist vision of the German majority; and many German Jews came to find their religious institutions devoid of meaning and purpose and sought refuge in an ultimately false universalism. But the standard generalization does not

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begin to do justice to the richness of German-Jewish civilization, let alone display any real understanding of the complexities of German politics and the difficulties Jews inevitably had in navigating them.

This alone is reason to welcome the recent completion of an extraordinary four-volume work, *German-Jewish History in Modern Times*.* Published more or less simultaneously in German and English, with a Hebrew version to follow, and written in clear and accessible prose, these monumental volumes represent the culmination of a long-term project of the Leo Baeck Institute, the premier body for research into the history of German Jews. They have been superbly edited by Michael A. Meyer, who in his own writings has done as much as anyone to provide a nuanced portrait of German-Jewish life; he has here assembled an impressive international team of scholars, each of whom provides a clear synthetic treatment of an assigned period or theme.

The new history covers Jewish life in the German-speaking lands from 1600 until 1945—which immediately raises a challenge: how does one define "German-Jewish" when there was no single political entity called Germany until 1871? And even after that date, should one include Austria and German-speaking areas like Bohemia, Moravia, and parts of Hungary, which belonged not to the newly-unified German Reich but to the Austro-Hungarian empire? Happily, the editors have opted for inclusiveness, treating Jews from all these areas and occasionally even beyond them, with the result that we learn the backdrop to the lives of Freud, Herzl, and Kafka—none of them, properly speaking, a German—no less than Mendelssohn, Marx, and Einstein. For the pre-1871 era, the editors have striven to tell the story of Jews in smaller cities and states in addition to that of Jews in larger and more important places like Prussia and Bavaria, Frankfurt and Hamburg. Through this means we are made powerfully aware of the many different arrangements under which Jews lived in German lands, and, in turn, of the diversity of Jewish political strategies and cultural choices developed in response to those arrangements.

Another significant decision by the editorial team was not to allow the plot to be governed by the Holocaust. Too many histories of Jews in German lands are told in the shadow, as it were, of the catastrophic end, thus creating an illusion of inevitability when, in fact, there was none. By eschewing the "prelude-to-destruction" model, Meyer and his colleagues help us understand that the Jews of Germany could no more know for a certainty what was coming than any of us knows where Jews in America will be 50 years from now.

At the same time, however, these books put paid to a tendency among lingering apologists for German Jewry—and, despite the triumph of the conventional wisdom, there *are* some—to pretend that everything was fine until 1933. Thus, in his recent memoir, *My German Question: Growing Up in Nazi Berlin*,† the well-known Yale historian Peter Gay writes unqualifiedly that "the German record was one of a century-long, almost uninterrupted improvement of relations between its Jewish and gentile populations." That this is nonsense is made especially clear in the treatment of the relevant period in *German-Jewish History in Modern Times*: relations between Germans and Jews before 1933 had a very definite ebb and flow to them, but they quite often displayed far more ebbing than flowing.

In short, the singular accomplishment of Meyer's team is to make it difficult wholeheartedly either to condemn or to apologize for German Jewry. So long as we run the tape forward, which is how people lived it, the cultural integration into German society that so many Jews passionately desired could never honestly be said to have been impossible. But neither did it ever represent more than one, very precarious, possibility among many.

OPENING WITH a succinct review of the Middle Ages, this new history begins in earnest with a discussion of the 16th-century return of Jews to the many German lands from which they had been expelled. Particularly important was the state of Prussia, where Jews were admitted only because of their assumed economic value. This necessarily had a distorting effect on the emergent community, making it unusually top-heavy economically and establishing a strictly utilitarian relationship between Jews and the state—something that would eventually have a deleterious impact on the willingness of the state to view them as citizens with human rights rather than as subjects with a particular role to fill.

Throughout this early period (1600-1750), Jews continued to exercise internal autonomy, running their own schools, maintaining their own social institutions, enforcing their own rules and regulations, and in general abiding by their own tradi-

* Columbia University Press. Vol. 1, *Tradition and Enlightenment, 1600-1780*, 435 pp., $52.50. Vol. 2, *Emancipation and Acculturation, 1780-1871*, 421 pp., $52.50. Vol. 3, *Integration in Dispute, 1871-1918*, 466 pp., $52.50. Vol. 4, *Renewal and Destruction, 1918-1945*, 479 pp., $52.50.

† Yale University Press, 240 pp., $27.50.

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tions and calendar. Their high culture was that of traditional rabbinic Judaism, with important collections of commentaries and responsa emanating regularly from the pens of their intellectual elite. Like the Jews of Europe generally, the Jews of Germany existed almost entirely within their own universe.

What challenged the viability of this arrangement was less modern ideas or even modern economics than the rise of absolutist states. The Jewish autonomous community was one of the many casualties of this new European order, which, in gathering power to the political center, broke up all the corporate bodies that had comprised late-medieval society. Inevitably this led to a considerable diminution in rabbinic authority (already waning on account of infighting among the rabbinic elite), and helped prepare the way for the emergence of the late-18th-century *haskalah* (enlightenment) movement, the first of many attempts in Germany to redefine the nature of Jewish culture and identity.

Leading spokesmen of *haskalah* argued that German Jews must learn to think of themselves as part of a larger whole, one in which they had genuine cultural and political interests. In the case of many Jews in Prussia and elsewhere, this idea was actually not quite so advanced as it might seem. Already by the middle of the 18th century, rich Jews had begun appearing in public in powdered wigs, much like Prussian gentlemen, and married Jewish women had adopted the wig (instead of a kerchief) to fulfill the religious requirement of keeping their hair covered. But that is hardly to say that the program of the *haskalah* went unopposed by religious traditionalists, who were quick to see where the demand that Jews learn German (again, many had already done so), develop a wider range of occupational talents, and learn to dress like others could lead.

ON THE political front, the *haskalah* initiated the effort to change once and for all the way the state related to Jews. Led by Moses Mendelssohn (1729-86), *haskalah* activists, in tandem with German liberals, articulated a political vision whose first principles were the near-total separation of church and state and the formation of a government of laws that would extend an open hand to all residents regardless of their religious affiliation. But this vision collided head-on with a competing view that was developing at nearly the same time, and according to which the state was much more than a regulatory web; rather, it was to be seen fundamentally as a vehicle for promoting and safeguarding the distinctive traditions of German culture, a culture to which Jews were and should remain permanently alien.

Much of German-Jewish history in the modern period can be understood in terms of the effort of German Jews to find an intermediate place along the spectrum marked out by these two positions, and Meyer's *History* is at its best in teasing out the ways in which the process of Jewish emancipation (as the achievement of civil equality came to be called) played itself out in those terms, both in the public arena of politics and culture and within the consciousness of Jews themselves. Aspiring to citizenship in their respective states, most Jews were also committed to affirming Jewish particularity—usually, but not always, through religious expression. But there were exceptions, and their stories are the ones more familiar to us today. For men like Ludwig Boerne and Heinrich Heine, and women like Dorothea Mendelssohn and Rahel Varnhagen (the subject of a vivid but tendentious study by Hannah Arendt), Jewish distinctiveness represented a burden to be left behind for the wider and sunnier shores of German culture and society. But, while a handful of Jews did successfully escape their Jewishness, most who made the attempt, including through conversion and intermarriage, failed to carry it off: in the minds of their German neighbors and as often as not in their own, they remained Jews. Ironically, even the individuals I have named are remembered today mostly as characters in an interesting chapter in Jewish history and, except for Heine, have all but disappeared from the chronicles of their beloved Germany.

In any case, the adaptive creativity shown by these types in their craving for acceptance pales beside the creativity displayed by those, by far the majority, who strove to retain their identity as Jews while reaching an honorable accommodation with Germany. As an example, consider the behavior of German Jewry in 1840, the year in which the Jews of Damascus were basely and sensationally accused of killing a Christian monk to use his blood for ritual purposes. When an international campaign was mounted to gain the release of the Syrian Jews being held for this "crime," many prominent German Jews declined to participate on the grounds that doing so would give the lie to their claim to have no ethnic ties to other Jews—a cardinal point in their efforts to win German citizenship. Abraham Geiger, the leading voice of Reform Judaism in Germany, reputedly announced in public that he was more concerned with the ability of a Jew to get a pharmacist's license in Berlin than with the life-or-death fate of Jews in some far-off land.

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But other German Jews—among them some avowed "assimilationists"—fought vigorously on behalf of the Damascus Jewish community. The young Heinrich Graetz, soon to emerge as the dean of German-Jewish historians, confided to his diary that the events in Syria had led to a resurgence among his contemporaries of "national feeling," a new "self-confidence and pride." Even some who had refused to join the effort to aid the Damascus community found themselves defending Judaism against Germans who gave credence to the scurrilous charges.

By the time of the unification of Germany in 1871, Jews everywhere in the German-speaking world had achieved emancipation. A once more-or-less united community was now hopelessly fragmented religiously, and was no less divided on the question of Jewish identity. Although most insisted that they were Germans by nationality, Jews by religion, many continued to protest that the ethnic component of Jewishness could not be compromised.

In the meantime, however, the achievement of emancipation also gave fresh impetus to those Germans who were determined to limit, or terminate, the influence of Jews on their country and culture. A new and virulent form of hatred—for which the term "anti-Semitism" was coined by one of its leading spokesmen—emerged in the decades after emancipation, and would soon exercise a tremendous impact on contemporary Jewish life and thought.

Again, the story is more complex than we have been led to believe. Many Jews responded to the new anti-Semitism by trying to address what they took to be the underlying complaint: that is, they felt the burden of proof was on them to behave better, or more "German." Some, albeit far fewer than is usually represented, came to be true self-hating Jews. But many others reacted by strengthening their Jewish identity or engaging in one form or another of political action—including, among a small minority, Zionism.

While Meyer and his collaborators give considerable attention to the rise of modern anti-Semitism and Jewish reactions to it, they do not allow it to overwhelm other aspects of Jewish life in the second German Reich (1871-1918). Particularly interesting is the story of the encounter with Eastern European Jews (*Ostjuden*), brought on by migration and later by World War I. It is undeniable that many German Jews felt little but contempt for their poorer, Yiddish-speaking brethren from the east. But others, upon familiarizing themselves with these exotic creatures, were induced to question the authenticity of their *own* beliefs and attitudes. A small number of Orthodox German Jews found their way to yeshivas in the East; others, who did not go to such lengths, were nevertheless deeply influenced by the "spirituality" of East European Judaism, especially in the form of Hasidism.

Indeed, disdain and admiration for eastern Jews were not mutually exclusive sentiments but often coexisted in the psyches of German Jews. What this suggests is that their own sense of identity still remained very much in flux, and that, whatever pulls they may have felt outward, away from Judaism, considerable affirmative impulses were also at work among them. It is worthy of note in this connection that when, after 1876, German Jews became legally free to break away from the Jewish community structure, fewer than 5 percent did so, while the remainder continued dutifully to pay assessments to support the communal institutions that sustained German-Jewish life.

Which brings us to the closing volume of this work, covering the period 1918-1945 and subtitled, with characteristic evenhandedness, "Renewal and Destruction." Fully half of the volume is devoted to the so-called Weimar period (1918-32), with extensive discussion of cultural and spiritual activities. Here again one is overwhelmed by the sheer complexity and variety of Jewish life and expression, from the self-consciously Jewish thinkers Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig to Walter Rathenau, the industrialist and statesman who served briefly as Germany's foreign minister before being assassinated by right-wing conspirators in 1922, to Theodor Lessing, a professed self-hating Jew who later repented and would be among the first to die at the hands of the Nazis in 1933. Many Jews at this time were in fact engaged in an extraordinary effort at self-realization, or, as one chapter heading puts it, in "learning to be Jews again." In the early Nazi period, a small number of collaborators notwithstanding, the Jewish community acquitted itself for the most part with dignity and pride. The rest of the story is too well known, and too terrible, to bear repeating.

Out of this welter, do any common themes emerge? For all the political and religious variety of German Jewry, one element of today's stereotype seems to stand up under scrutiny: throughout the last two centuries, and with exceptions duly noted, German Jews were unrelenting in their public commitment to bourgeois civility. They were energetic devotees of the German idea

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of *Bildung*, or education and cultivation, and avid consumers and supporters of the arts. This was true, interestingly enough, all across the religious spectrum. In the major cities, even in the most self-consciously Orthodox homes, Goethe and Schiller, Mozart and Beethoven, were sometimes more frequent "guests" than the revered authors of Jewish religious classics.

We must not underestimate the significance of this, especially in light of the horrific sequel. The inescapable fact is that for many, probably most, German Jews, the new worlds that were opened to them by their exposure to German culture made them feel more fully human, more fully alive, than traditional Jewish culture ever did or could. The sense of liberation and completion experienced by Jews as they thrust themselves into every realm of Western art and thought is palpable to anyone who reads the memoirs they produced in such abundance. Sometimes, as in the cases of Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, this quest for fulfillment led back to Jewish tradition; sometimes not. But what German culture, and the idea if not the practice of German civility, meant to all of them should not be obscured in retrospect by the overwhelmingly stunning and vicious events that followed.

Here, indeed, may lie the true "lesson" of German-Jewish history for today. Certainly there were individuals best described in epithets like "appeaser," "assimilationist," or "self-hating." But, through a tumultuous cycle of rising expectations and deflating disappointments, German Jews in the aggregate developed an extraordinary civilization, one that was prey (as we now know) to tragic error but that was also capable of mobilizing tremendous resources of intellect, creativity, and sheer persistence. Whether the actual situations of American and German Jews have ever been or ever will be comparable is highly doubtful. But from the strategies German Jews successfully pioneered for negotiating the challenges of modernity, from their still-compelling religious ideas, from their unabashed love of high culture, and, yes, from their unshakable commitment to bourgeois civility, Americans in general and American Jews in particular do in fact still have much to learn.

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OBSERVATIONS

Can Parents Be Trusted?

Chester E. Finn, Jr.

NO ISSUE has more preoccupied our political and cultural debates than the condition of the American family. From welfare and gun control to taxes and the Internet, every discussion of public policy eventually seems to turn to the relationship between parents and children. This is especially the case when the subject is education.

As conservatives see it, the existing public-school system has actually exacerbated many of the ills afflicting our families. American students, they point out, have never before spent so much of their lives in school, and—thanks to the insatiably self-aggrandizing tendencies of the liberal state—never before have the public schools reached so deeply into domains once reserved to parents, churches, and neighborhoods. Today, teachers and school administrators busy themselves with everything from sex education and social services to drug counseling and values "clarification." At the same time, the public schools have been swept by a thousand trendy pedagogical fads and theories. In the eyes of conservatives, these developments have robbed the family of much of its traditional authority while doing less than nothing to mitigate the problems of American children. Today those children are behaving worse and learning less than ever before.

Since the mid-1980's, there has also been a conservative response to these dismal trends: a countermovement that marches under the banner of school choice. At its boldest, in cities like Milwaukee and Cleveland, and recently in the state of Florida, school choice has meant vouchers to help low-income families send their children to private schools. More modestly, it has meant new options within the public-school system, from charter schools (many of them founded by parents) to schemes of open enrollment under which students may attend any school in their district or, sometimes, their state.

The core conviction behind these varied strategies is that parents should make more of the important decisions about their children's education—and that the state should make fewer of them. Indeed, the movement for school choice can be said to hinge on the conviction that putting parents in charge is the surest, perhaps the only, way to raise successful kids, shore up our weakened families, and cure our ailing education system. For not only do parents have their children's best interests at heart—more than any government official or paid professional ever could—but the decisions they make on their children's behalf can be counted on to be wise and conscientious.

But is this so?

THIS VERY question has been raised in the context of today's education debate—by, as it happens, fretful defenders of our current public-school system. Alarmed at the spread of choice programs, spokesmen for teachers' unions and others have suggested that the low-income and minority parents whose children are the primary beneficiaries of such programs tend to lack the necessary

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background or motivation to make sound education decisions, and will end up basing their choice of school not on academic excellence or discipline but on factors like sports teams or proximity to home.

It is too early in the voucher experiment to answer such charges definitively. But what we do know is that every voucher program to date has drawn an overwhelming response from parents determined to improve their children's prospects. To take one notable instance, the Children's Scholarship Fund—the ambitious, privately-funded voucher program recently launched by the philanthropists Theodore J. Forstmann and John T. Walton—received more than a million low-income applications. In Baltimore alone, over 40 percent of eligible families sought this aid. It seems that, given a chance, many disadvantaged parents will grab any opportunity for their children to do better, knowing full well that doing better will require them to work hard, acquire habits of study and discipline, and subject themselves to rigorous standards.

But put aside the special case of school choice. What of the role played *in general* by today's parents—rich and poor, blue- and white-collar, of every race—in shaping their children's attitudes toward education and, by extension, society? Here, even though hard statistical evidence is scarce, every informed observer knows there is reason to worry. Although many parents continue to work with great determination to ensure that their children develop into adults of sound character, an appallingly large number are falling down on the job. The problem is not usually gross negligence but rather a kind of moral indifference, and its consequences are no less visible in our better schools than in our more troubled ones.

CONSIDER, TO begin with, the steady erosion of the very idea of academic merit. Professional educators have long tried to banish competition and rankings from the schools. Once, parents used to resist this trend, but now many have enthusiastically joined in. They insist that schools make their children appear outstanding—or at least on a par with their classmates—whether they are or not.

Pressure of this sort can start early. In Annapolis, Maryland, the parents of one five-year-old recently filed suit against his expensive private school. Their aim: to force the school to promote their son to first grade rather than giving him another year of kindergarten as his teachers recommended. Many elementary schools have also been hit by their own variety of the grade inflation that is the curse of contemporary colleges and high schools. A fifth-grade teacher in Rhode Island reports that parents these days "won't accept anything less than an A or a B."

Parental resistance to academic distinctions is even more ferocious at the secondary level. This year, Lake City High School in Coeur d'Alène, Idaho, designated no fewer than ten valedictorians for its graduating class of 265 students. As the lone valedictorian of the class of 1992 philosophized, "more parents and students are happy for the recognition, . . . and administrators avoid having to take any kind of stand that might upset families in town with children contending for the award." At expensive private schools, parents increasingly feel angry at the *school* if their children do not bring home respectable grades; after all, as the chief counselor at one upscale institution outside Philadelphia put it, they are "paying much too much money to have their kids in the bottom half of the class." Such attitudes no doubt help to explain why more than half of American secondary schools have already stopped ranking their graduates by grade-point average or other gauges of academic attainment.

Standardized tests, too, have been opposed by parents who seemingly care more about the appearance than the reality of academic success. In Michigan, some parents have kept their college-bound children home from the state's tough new proficiency exam lest their scores prove disappointing. Some psychologists report getting calls from parents who actually want their high-school children to be classified as "learning disabled"—a designation that will win them extra time for completing the SAT and other tests.

IF MANY parents are willing to resort to open deception when it comes to accurate assessments of their children's academic prowess, they are also far less inclined than they once were to insist that their children behave properly.

Disputes over basic questions of decorum and conduct are now routine in American schools. For every parent who enthusiastically endorses school uniforms, there are many more who object to even the most rudimentary dress code, like the families in a posh New York suburb who protested collectively when a local middle school tried to ban tank tops. Simple orderliness has also become a matter of contention. According to one veteran school-bus driver from Buffalo, New York, a child on his route had the full backing of his father in rebuffing the driver's efforts to make him "stay seated and keep his voice down"; this is hardly an atypical example. Even outright displays of violence are not enough to persuade some parents that their youngsters would benefit from disciplinary action. After suspending a third-grade boy for attacking a female classmate, an elementary-school principal in New Hampshire was surprised to receive a visit from the child's indignant mother and father. "Boys just express their anger physically," they informed him.

In sum, whether the transgression is of the academic variety—one

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father of a plagiarizing high-school senior, after intervening unsuccessfully with the teacher, contacted several school officials to get lighter treatment for his son—or touches on physical misbehavior, the trend is unmistakable. Where once schools and parents generally joined forces to help a child understand how he erred, endure the penalty, and conform to educational and social norms, today parents go to great lengths, from lying to litigation and political pressure, to keep their child from suffering the consequences of his own actions. "If I had a problem with a teacher," a New Jersey parent recently recalled in a focus group, "the first thing my mother said was, 'What did you do?' Now the teacher is always wrong."

AS TEACHERS themselves see it, the problems of the classroom—including, according to a recent survey, students who are late and unprepared, who are disruptive, who fail to do homework, or who try to get by with as little work as possible—have their roots in children's home lives. Overwhelming majorities of teachers complain that parents are not doing their part: not only do they refuse to hold their offspring accountable for their performance at school, they also fail "to set limits and create structure at home" or to control the amount of time their children spend with television and video games.

Such complaints must be taken with a grain of salt: teachers are not eager to blame themselves for the problems in their classrooms. But there is no doubt that parents can be counted on less and less to reinforce whatever efforts are in fact being made by the schools. They take minimal interest in their children's studies, fail to meet with teachers, and do not participate in school events. As a teacher in Cleveland lamented, "You send notices home, there's no response. You ask parents to come to conferences, they don't come. You send homework home, and you can see that parents aren't paying attention to it."

One reason for this general pattern of neglect is self-absorbed and/or workaholic adults. Occupied for long hours at the office, at the health club, or perhaps at "day-trading" on their laptop computers, many parents leave the supervision of their children to others. "We have to shoo [the children] home at six sometimes," says a New York City middle-school director quoted by Kay S. Hymowitz in *City Journal*. "They don't want to go home. No one's there."

Typically, such parents try to compensate for their many absences by indulging their children, thus making matters even worse. These are the parents who let their children watch television while ostensibly doing homework, or skip school when there is something else they would rather do (perhaps even faking an excuse-to-the-teacher on their behalf). Purchasing the beer for underage youngsters' weekend parties is also hardly unknown among today's parents.

More conscientious mothers and fathers sometimes suffer from a different problem: they are stymied by the task of teaching responsibility. Heirs or alumni of the 1960's counterculture, they tend to be ambivalent about the exercise of authority, fearful of upsetting their children or of quashing their self-expression, eager at all costs to appear "supportive." When faced with unsavory friends, or evidence of drugs or alcohol, they are reluctant to intervene, for did not they, too, "experiment" in their youth? This style of "passive parenting," as Hymowitz calls it, comprises equal parts of incompetence, feel-good psychology, and the remnants of 60's ideology. The combination is deadly.

WHATEVER FORM it takes, today's pattern of parental abdication helps explain why the mission of our schools has expanded so radically in recent years. With more and more children arriving in the classroom in obvious need of a moral compass, teachers, counselors, and administrators have willy-nilly taken on more and more nonacademic duties, reaching into every corner of their students' lives. As one veteran Virginia teacher puts it, "Most schools do more parenting than could have been imagined a few decades ago."

The trouble, of course, is exactly what conservatives have pinpointed: schools are no good at this sort of thing, and when they attempt it, they are apt to resort to politically-correct fads of dubious merit, from AIDS prevention to training in self-esteem. Worse, as parents begin to think it is the school's job to see that their children have the right values, they become even more disengaged, prompting demands for still more action by the public-school system and playing into the hands both of an overreaching education bureaucracy and of interest groups keen to inflict their favored causes on malleable children.

The path out of this maze is far from clear. Certainly, given the experience of the last 30 years, the last thing we should want is to provide an excuse for the state to resume or expand its parental ministrations to our schoolchildren. Focusing on the institutions themselves, as conservatives and alarmed parents have done, is obviously a good idea. There is already some evidence that voucher programs, charter schools, and home-schooling foster a greater sense of parental involvement and civic engagement. Entrusting some extra-academic services to faith-based organizations might also relieve the schools of some of their burden and help teachers—at least those teachers so disposed—to concentrate on things that are within their control, like basic academic skills and fundamental knowledge.

All such efforts are to be encouraged, and deserve widespread emulation. But we also need to be realistic: the problem I have sketched is a matter by now of entrenched cultural assumptions and routine adult

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behavior. As such, it cannot be easily or speedily addressed by changes in institutional policy alone. Francis Fukuyama has lately suggested that our society is on the verge of a large cultural shift, away from the destructive habits and attitudes of what he calls the Great Disruption and toward a broadly-based reassertion of more traditional norms. If so, it will not come a moment too soon. But until that blessed day arrives, and works its transforming power in the minds and hearts of American parents, we have, alas, no good reason to hope that their children will become much better educated or much better behaved than they are right now—and plenty of reason to fear that many of them will be worse.

MOVIES

The Kubrick Mystique

Midge Decter

IN RESPONSE to an unbearably stuffy declaration by her husband, a woman, high on pot, details for him her sexual fantasy concerning a certain naval officer she once had a fleeting glance of. A little later, she tells him about a dream she has had of being handed from man to man in one big bath of sex. This sends the husband on a long night's journey in search of sexual adventure, including an unconsummated encounter with a hooker and an elaborately ceremonial orgy from which he is evicted. Thus chastened, he tells his wife all. Whereupon they know themselves to be in a serious marital crisis but determine to overcome it. All ends soberly but happily in a shopping excursion to FAO Schwarz.

So goes the plot of *Eyes Wide Shut*, the much-anticipated and posthumously screened last work of Stanley Kubrick, titular genius of filmmaking. In the myriad tributes to Kubrick after his death last March that were published in the form of interviews or memoirs—as well as in a little book about the making of this movie by its screenwriter, Frederic Raphael*—we learn that considerations of plot were never uppermost in this director's mind; for him, all was subordinate to the camera. Watching *Eyes Wide Shut*, no one could doubt it.

Just when this story is supposed to take place, for instance, a not-irrelevant detail in a movie about the pursuit of sex, is very hard to say. A little bedtime toke from a supply of grass kept in the medicine cabinet would suggest that the time is somewhere in the mid-70's. But at one point there is mention of a woman's having just discovered that she is HIV-positive, which would seem to indicate a considerably later date. On the other hand, we are asked to believe that the hero, who is a doctor, is both shocked and fascinated to learn of the existence of a regularly organized orgy and is prepared to spend, by my calculation, nearly a thousand dollars in cash to outfit himself properly (since the orgy, clearly organized as much for Kubrick's camera as for the enrichment of his character's soul, is a masked and costumed affair) and get to a mansion far, far out of town where it is being—no other word will do—staged.

Now, by the 1970's, a simple perusal of the advertisements in a couple of well-known publications, featured especially on the newsstands of the New York streets through which we see the good doctor traveling, would have provided him with the opportunity to take part in any number of orgies a lot closer by and a lot less expensive. True, such being the nature of orgies, he might have been required to do a few things displeasing or even shocking to him, and we know he is an innocent because when he goes in search of a hooker who has previously approached him, he actually brings her . . . a *cake*. But the point is that

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* *Eyes Wide Open*. Ballantine Books, 190 pp., $12.00.

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Stanley Kubrick clearly neither knew nor cared who any of the characters in this movie really is, or what any of them thinks, or feels, or, in fact, does.

Instead, he seemed to be relying on the beauty and endless charm of Tom Cruise and the visual promise held out by an introductory glimpse of the naked backside of Nicole Kidman, a gifted actress whom Kubrick treats very badly in this film, as he did all actresses in all his movies where women's roles are supposed to count for something. She has silly lines to speak, and she is required to do silly things with her face and her body. Nor does the fact that she and Tom Cruise are in real life husband and wife imbue their screen behavior together with the least bit of naturalness. All of it, the so-called plot and the so-called characters, even those required to provide a kind of grotesque comic relief along the way, are no more than machinery for bringing the movie to what was obviously the heart of Stanley Kubrick's true desire: to choreograph and film his peculiar vision of an orgy. This, you might say, is the cinematic peak toward which everything climbs and from which everything subsequently descends.

And quite an orgy it is, complete with the feeling of having been researched from ancient days and then "artistically" transposed into the kind of ritual even the ancients could scarcely have dreamed of. First, there is that great empty mansion, outside of which, to make you understand that nothing so gross as the sweaty muscularity of the masses will mar the beauty of the occasion, are parked the most luxurious of limousines. Then, everyone, including the bouncers to whom the guests must speak a password in order to gain admittance, is elaborately masked. Inside, there is organ music, and seated in the center of a circle of cloaked and masked maidens sits someone who is obviously the master of the proceedings, muttering mystical incantations. He orders the girls to rise. They do so, throw off their capes, and reveal a collection of the most beautiful female bodies ever glimpsed on land or sea.

Somewhere in the movie it is suggested that the women are high-class hookers, but it is to be doubted that there is on earth so vast a supply of whores, even high-class whores, anything like these specimens, in search of whom Kubrick's casting director must have scoured a universe of models' agencies and offices of cosmetic surgeons. In any case, each of them selects one of the masked men standing behind the circle and takes him off somewhere. We get a glimpse of that bacchanalian somewhere when our poor star-crossed hero is led away for questioning and then thrown out.

The story of the filming of the scene of mass copulation has by now been much told: how Kubrick shot it with real bodies engaging in real sex acts of various kinds but, in order to escape a rating of NC-17, today's equivalent of X, electronically doctored the scene to interpose images of spectators blocking the view of the copulaters' genitals. One can see what is happening but not in its full glory—though European audiences do get to see All. But even nakedly shown, the scene could hardly be as affecting as the American raters feared—except maybe to a group of twelve-year-olds. As at least some critics have already complained, the whole thing, even those beautiful female bodies, all of them beautiful in the same way, is utterly aestheticized and unerotic.

Eyes Wide Shut, for all its baring of breasts and buttocks, is a singularly callow piece of moviemaking. It is said to be derived from, or inspired by, or based on, a 1929 novella, *Dream Rhapsody*, by Arthur Schnitzler, a Viennese writer who was—as, it seems, were many Viennese intellectuals of his day—deeply interested in dreams and fantasies and other subconscious phenomena. The screenplay by Frederic Raphael seems to have followed Schnitzler's story fairly closely. But surely, of all people, a celebrated moviemaker should have been the first to understand that though you can *write* about ideas, you cannot film them except by putting a lot of words in people's mouths. This, however, is something Kubrick seems to have been curiously reluctant to do, perhaps because he feared it would distract him; and so it is hard to sense just what in the Schnitzler story he found so gripping.

Raphael, himself the author of one of the most brilliant television dramas ever produced, a 1970's series called *The Glittering Prizes*, tells us that the Schnitzler story had been on Kubrick's mind for years. Maybe it had, but it is so very much the product of a certain cultural moment that there is no way to reproduce it except as a kind of period drama. But this, too, probably because he did not really understand the story in the first place, Kubrick seems to have been averse to doing. The upshot is that he engaged the services of one of the best screenwriters in the Western world and then turned his work to inanity.

The audience with whom I saw *Eyes Wide Shut* seemed singularly untouched by it, by the orgy, by Tom Cruise, by Nicole Kidman, by anything. My husband reported that later, in the men's room, someone was heard to say, "My God! When was this supposed to be? Hadn't the guy ever heard of Plato's Retreat" (a now-defunct but once famous gathering place for public sexual activity in New York)?

This question of what Stanley Kubrick may or may not have heard of is a highly relevant one. He had been living for years in a hideaway in England from which, it is said, certain phobias kept him from venturing forth. To be sure, when he actually filmed something—which, all told, he did rather infrequently—he had to leave home for a while. But until the actual filming, as

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Raphael pointedly describes, everyone came to him: producer, screenwriter, even stars like Cruise and Kidman. The rest of his interaction with the world seems to have been conducted by telephone. If you want to become a legend, it is hard to think of a better way, even if it does tend to weaken what the Germans call the feel of the fingertips.

In any case, a legend he certainly became. Amid the flood of articles after his sudden death, there were some, by people who knew him or claimed to know him, detailing the various personal oddities imposed upon him by his genius. A number of these were endearing, a number were just, well, odd. Someone revealed, for example, that Kubrick watched TV sitcoms all day long, but in a tone that might have been used had he been disclosing that T.S. Eliot was addicted to the penny press.

Living isolated as he did was necessary but certainly not sufficient for Kubrick to have been granted the perks of genius he claimed for himself, including total power over his movies. To achieve such a thing requires absolute and untiring commitment to one's public persona. But in Kubrick's case it required something else as well: namely, the special culture of Hollywood, California.

A man who made fewer than a dozen movies even worth mentioning, Kubrick had a quirky gift that, truth to tell, worked best in the Hollywood byroads. *The Killing* (1956), for instance—the first piece of work of his to count—is a gripping small movie, and *Dr. Strangelove* (1964), which basically stays in one room far beneath the ground and does totally engaging things with its actors' faces and voices, is a mean little masterpiece. (It also depends for its effect on a script that was clearly not Kubrick's—a fact for which, we are told, he never forgave its author, Terry Southern, another quirky talent whose only gift was for derangement of one kind or another.)

Then there was *2001* (1968), a movie that meant nothing and was entirely visual and seemed to provide large numbers of young people with a helpful accompaniment to getting stoned. To this list may also be added *Paths of Glory* (1957), the best-realized of his films—perhaps because it is the cruelest—and *Spartacus* (1960), which is said to have given Kubrick a lot of trouble but, for an addict of old-timey extravaganzas like me, remains a laugh a minute. ("Oh Spah-ta-cus," moans the slave played by the Bronx-bred Tony Curtis, "I love yuh like the fathuh I nevah had.")

KUBRICK HAD started out as a photographer, which in some instances proved a great boon—as when, in creating the tension essential to *Dr. Strangelove*, his camera makes love to the beautifully hard-bitten face of the actor Sterling Hayden. But at other times, as in *Barry Lyndon* (1975), piously decreed a wonder by those who like to feel they are in the presence of a Classic, the photography merely adds to the general and highly misplaced pomposity.

But whence this pomposity? That is the significant question about the career of Stanley Kubrick as a Hollywood story. He was a gifted Jewish boy from the Bronx and we may imagine him in his youthful days as a bit of an intellectual, creative, dying to get out, positively drunk on the movies: a familiar figure. But the Hollywood movies he was drunk on, like the sitcoms he continued to watch until his death, were made by people who were completely self-confident and at the same time without illusions about themselves. "Art," should any prove to emerge from what they did, was strictly an unintended by-product, and often there was no way of determining whether it was present or not present.

It is said, for instance, that while *Casablanca* (1942) was being made, all those connected with it were convinced they had a stinker on their hands. In short, movies were the entertainment industry, though sometimes the people involved had a higher gift than the industry may have cared about or recognized until years later. Stanley Kubrick's friend Stanley Donen was such a one, a hoofer with a modest way about him who made what turned out to be an imperishable classic, *Singin' in the Rain*.

No other cultural product used to work like this, certainly not books or the theater, but it is what gave Hollywood its air of being wide open and full of endless possibility. Of course, things were not quite so wide open as they felt—nothing ultimately devoted to profit is—but every year movies were being turned out by the hundreds for an ever-hungry audience, and to the young Stanley Kubrick this must have seemed a nut just right for his cracking.

And a good thing for him, too. Nowadays, when movies have become unbelievably expensive to produce and bankers have the final say, the ambition to make them must feel considerably more problematic to a young would-be. On the other hand, there is the virtually separate industry of "independents," which includes everything from the projects of film-school students training their cameras on their own navels to the work of serious strivers who exhibit at special film festivals devoted to the as-yet unacknowledged; there is now even a TV channel devoted to their products. But for Kubrick, the last thing he needed in starting out was special indulgence for his professional eccentricities.

It is hard to date exactly when and how art with a capital A entered the picture business, though very likely the name of Orson Welles comes in at some point. Some serious film historians, like Richard Schickel, would set the date at the very beginning, with figures like D.W. Griffith and Erich von Stroheim and Charlie Chaplin (whose own art was hardly to benefit, to put it mildly, from his having gained the

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idea that it constituted Art). But in a sense of the term that would be more relevant to someone like Kubrick, chances are that the longing to push out the envelope of entertainment was stoked by later developments.

Be that as it may, at some point, as Hollywood was breaking out of the tyranny of the old studio system, its culture was bitten with the bug of yearning for higher things. Directors assumed an importance they had never had before, and with directors in the saddle, their power enhanced by an ever-improving technology, could filmmaking—as opposed to moviemaking—be far behind?*

Some of the products of this new development benefited enormously from it; many movies certainly *looked* better, and could pull off more interesting stunts. And some were plain great, with a scope and sweep and beauty unmatched by any old studio film. But for some directors and producers, and especially, for some reason, certain clever Jewish boys from the big city whose real talent was for the odd or zany, the new dispensation was hardly beneficial.

Woody Allen comes to mind here, a man with a very particular and restricted talent for making silly fun of people like himself who grew puffed up and overambitious and mean-spirited as the praise by his claque of admirers grew ever more high-flown. And as for Stanley Kubrick, he went, as they say, the whole nine yards, from a true gift for what came to be called *film noir* to the aestheticized windiness of *Barry Lyndon* to the almost boyish obtuseness of *Eyes Wide Shut*.

This story, were it only Kubrick's, would not matter so much. After all, he was not the first entertainer to be tripped up by his pretensions. But the story is not his alone. It involves a whole lot of people who have been only too willing to participate with him in creating the myth of his genius. It involves, that is, sycophantic friends, show-biz publicists and journalists, and, especially, reviewers, just as it has involved highly employable stars willing to jump at his beck and call and a gifted and successful screenwriter like Frederic Raphael, patiently submitting to endless demands for rewrites that he must have known to be ever more damaging to his work.

Everybody, it seems, loves to be mixed up with a Genius, even if his genius is of their own making. And to judge from the fate of Stanley Kubrick, a dead genius is best of all.

* My own first glimpse of what was happening occurred at a revival house in upper Manhattan where the program notes referred to one of my beloved Westerns as the "third in the John Ford cavalry trilogy."

ART

Mary Cassatt, Modern Painter

Steven C. Munson

"I WILL not admit that a woman can draw so well," said Edgar Degas. He was talking about Mary Cassatt, the only American to exhibit with the 19th-century painters who called themselves the Independents but are better known as the Impressionists, and the subject of a recent show at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.*

The show contained several of Cassatt's greatest paintings and prints, although the absence of any of her pastels was a major disappointment. But beyond the pleasure of being able to view such works as *Study* (1885-86), *Portrait of a Little Girl* (1878), and *Woman Reading* (1878-79), the exhibit provided an occasion for thinking about what it meant for Cassatt to be both a woman and an artist. In

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* "Mary Cassatt: Modern Woman" ran from June 6 to September 6. It had earlier appeared at the Museum of Fine Arts (Boston) and at the Art Institute of Chicago.

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these days when "women's art" of one sort or another—from the political to the pornographic to the homespun—seems to pop up wherever one turns, and when credit for the achievements of long-established male artists is, in an atmosphere of conscious revisionism, being retroactively given to the previously unrecognized women in their lives, pondering the life and career of Mary Cassatt is, in fact, both refreshing and clarifying.

BORN IN 1844 into a well-to-do family from what is now Pittsburgh, Mary Cassatt had her first exposure to Europe as a young girl, when her family spent two years living in Germany and France. From 1861 to 1864, she was enrolled in the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia. It was there that she made the decision to become an artist and move to Paris. Although the initial reaction from her family was far from encouraging—"I would rather see you dead," her father told her at one point—she eventually got her way.

Once in Paris, she abandoned formal academic training in favor of independent study at the Louvre and the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. "One does not need to follow the lessons of an instructor," she would tell a biographer years later; "the teaching of the museums is sufficient." Though forced to leave France by the Franco-Prussian war in 1870, she spent the next several years acting in accordance with this principle, studying Correggio in Italy, Velázquez in Spain, Hals in Belgium, and Rubens in the Netherlands. But it was after her return to Paris in 1873 that she made her most important aesthetic discovery:

> How well I remember [she later recalled] . . . seeing for the first time Degas's pastels in the window of a picture dealer on the Boulevard Haussmann. I used to go and flatten my nose against that window and absorb all I could of his art. It changed my life.

Already chafing under the rigidities of the Salon system—though several of her paintings had been accepted for exhibition in the late 1860's and early 1870's, two were rejected in 1875, one because it was "too bright"—Cassatt jumped at Degas's invitation, in 1877, to join the Independents, a group that then included Monet, Renoir, Cézanne, and Pissarro, among others. This decision required no small amount of courage, for it meant, among other things, that she would no longer be producing pictures that were intended to win the approval of the official art establishment. By contrast, a fellow American and contemporary of Cassatt's, John Singer Sargent, could not bring himself to follow a similarly independent path. When the showing of one of his greatest pictures, *Madame X* (1884), provoked a scandal, he quickly retreated to the safety of painting the kind of portraits that pleased both his sitters and the art world's powers that then were. Cassatt's response to this episode was to stop speaking to him.

Her relations with Degas, who was notoriously difficult to get along with, were another matter. Their friendship—one of the great collaborations in the history of modern art—lasted most of four decades and survived several breaks, including one over the Dreyfus Affair (one side of Degas's misanthropy was his anti-Semitism). And though he was her inspiration and mentor, she taught him as well. In one oft-recounted episode, Cassatt, angered by a typically dismissive Degas response to a comment she had made about a certain painting's lack of "style," set out to disprove his point by making a beautiful picture of an ugly girl. Degas was so overwhelmed by the result that he immediately acquired it and kept it until the day he died.

THAT PAINTING, *Study*, which shows a very plain girl arranging her hair, was the first one on display at the National Gallery, and it is not hard to understand Degas's reaction to it. It has all the qualities that distinguish Cassatt's most powerful Impressionist-phase pictures: it is highly realistic, in both a physical and psychological sense; it shows a solitary female figure unaware of being observed; its coloring (almost entirely shades of rose and white) is extremely subtle; and it is composed in such a way that the image one sees is enlivened by its fusion with the picture surface.

It is in large part the compositional strength of these paintings, built on asymmetrical cropping—and here, as much as anywhere in her work, lies the influence of Degas—that neutralizes the possibility of a sentimental reaction being aroused in the viewer. This lack of sentimentality is, indeed, one of the most striking aspects of Cassatt's best work, especially in light of the subjects she chose. It was recognized by the French critic Achille Segard, who wrote in 1913 that what set her apart from other Impressionists was "the intellectual quality of her feelings, and . . . a sort of emotional lyricism that is revealed in her work, through faces, gestures, and movements alone."

One encountered this state of thoughtfulness in a number of the paintings at the National Gallery. It was expressed not merely in the faces of the women she painted but also, most notably, in their hands. Cassatt's ability to capture in her figures such subtle expressions of movement links her (again) with Degas, just as her highly effective use of black—a color the "purer" Impressionists shunned—links her to Manet. Unlike Degas, however, she drew and painted women who were almost always dressed; and unlike Manet, she was often a ruthlessly neutral observer of those she sought to depict.

Her neutrality, or disinterestedness, enabled her to paint extraordinarily compelling pictures of people engaged in seemingly inconsequential activity—or inactivity. *Por-*

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trait of a Little Girl shows a bored child sprawled in a blue armchair with a look that combines girlish petulance and dreaminess with female calculation. From near the top center of the picture—the back of the long room strewn with more blue armchairs—runs a Degas-esque gray floor, a river of paint that pushes itself to the picture surface halfway down the canvas. The movement thus begun is then transposed to the lazy gesture of the girl, whose chair is closest to the viewer, and culminates in the toe of her dangling left foot, which appears to break through the picture plane itself near the bottom of the canvas. This denouement signals the irresistible convergence of form, subject, and artistic sensibility, a convergence that gives the picture a strange quality of delightful seriousness.

Portrait of a Little Girl reminds one of Renoir, and even more of Degas, but it is distinctly Cassatt, and its genius is recapitulated in a number of other paintings of equally surprising weight and power, including *Woman Reading*, *Portrait of a Lady* (1878), *Portrait of Madame J.* (1879-80), and *Tea* (1879-80). These last two, with inklings of a certain decorative patterning in their composition, also seem to anticipate Matisse.

The forcefulness of Cassatt's Impressionist pictures, conveyed not only in the strength of her drawing and sense of composition but also in the passages of extremely vigorous and rapid brushwork, reveals that her first priorities were aesthetic. This is confirmed as well by the exquisitely sensitive and psychologically complex pictures of mothers with their children for which she is perhaps best known and which derived from her effort to reinterpret various motifs from the religious art of the Renaissance by adapting them to scenes from everyday modern life. It is even indicated by the paintings that were the weakest in the National Gallery show, such as *Young Women Picking Fruit* (1891-92), which depict women in allegorical poses and which suffer from a failure fully to integrate the drawn figures with their background

BUT IF the actual record of her work and life leaves little doubt that her art was driven by aesthetic concerns above all others, this has not prevented some in our own day from seeking to discern a "political" content in Cassatt's use of female-related themes and to fabricate a link between her support for such things as women's suffrage and contemporary American feminism. Such efforts should be rejected for what they are: an anachronistic attempt to interpret Cassatt's art in a way that makes it more "acceptable" in today's radicalized cultural climate.

In truth, Cassatt's artistic career had nothing to do with the kind of feminism with which we are so dishearteningly familiar—the kind, that is, which seeks to deny or abolish woman's nature—and everything to do with the kind of hard choices made by individuals who commit themselves singlemindedly and wholeheartedly to pursuing a personal vision. It is said that Degas, who consciously decided not to marry and have a family because he believed it would interfere with his work, came to regret this decision bitterly in old age. For Cassatt, as a woman who made such a renunciation herself, it must have had a different meaning, though no trace of it appears in her art, except perhaps for the air of gravity and solitude that pervades it.

As the title of the National Gallery show suggests, she was indeed a "modern woman," and in at least two important respects: she unabashedly sought recognition through dedication to a cause of her own choosing; and she shunned the traditional route to female success, namely, marrying, or allying oneself with, a powerful man. In this regard, she stands in marked contrast to two famous 20th-century female painters, Georgia O'Keeffe and Helen Frankenthaler, both of whom received a big boost from their involvement with men in a position to influence their careers decisively: the photographer and art dealer Alfred Steiglitz in the case of O'Keeffe and the art critic Clement Greenberg in the case of the young Frankenthaler. Whether these alliances obviated their need for a more intense personal struggle, and whether that in turn limited their achievements, cannot really be known. But that those achievements were limited, especially in comparison with the work of Cassatt, is undeniable.

Cassatt's independence sometimes drove Degas to distraction. As she once told a friend who asked how she could get on with him,

> Oh, I am independent! I can live alone and I love to work. Sometimes it made him furious that he could not find a chink in my armor, and there would be months when we just could not see each other, and then something I painted would bring us together again. . . .

This sort of spirit and integrity cannot be misappropriated, even in today's world.

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Books in Review

Unwelcome Mat?

Heaven's Door:
Immigration Policy and the
American Economy
by George J. Borjas
Princeton. 264 pp. $27.95

Reviewed by
Irwin M. Stelzer

AT LAST, the emotional subject of immigration has been addressed by a scholar who does four things right: he asks the appropriate questions; he is scrupulous in his use of the complicated data on immigrants' performance and behavior; he carefully considers opposing interpretations of those data; and he sets out policy proposals that constitute the basis around which future debates should revolve. These virtues are much needed in a debate variously infused with the prejudices of those who would altogether shut "Heaven's Door" to newcomers; the nostalgia of those who remember when their own parents or grandparents were among the tempest-tossed, huddled masses yearning to breathe free; and the narrowly self-interested concerns of those who would benefit from either a constriction or an expansion of the cheap labor immigrants supply.

How many immigrants do we want, and which ones should they be? These, according to George Borjas, an economist at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, are the two most relevant questions for policy. But in order to answer them, he points out, we need to know exactly what the United States means to accomplish through immigration. If our goals are mainly humanitarian, for example, we should develop a policy designed to relieve suffering around the world by taking in the poor, the victims of oppression, and even the ill. If, on the other hand, our goal is to maximize the economic welfare of our own native population without at the same time greatly increasing the amount of inequality in society, a far different policy is called for.

Borjas leaves no doubt as to where he himself stands. His aim is to devise a policy that will "best serve the interests of the United States," by which he means the economic well-being of Americans. What is needed to accomplish that, in his considered view, is a shift away from our present system, which is based on the principle of family reunification, toward one that will favor skilled workers. He would also reduce sharply the current level of immigration. A measure of his integrity as a scholar is his frank acknowledgment that he himself, who came to this country with his mother as a penniless escapee from Castro's Cuba, would probably not have passed the test "implicit in the skills-oriented immigration policy" he now advocates. Nevertheless, this is the conclusion to which he has arrived after carefully studying all the data, the highlights of which are roughly as follows.

DURING THE late 1990's, almost one million legal and 300,000 illegal immigrants have arrived in America annually, topping the 900,000 annual figure reached during the first decade of this century,

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when the great migration of 1880-1924 was at its peak. Of course, since our overall population is now much larger, the foreign-born share is less than it was in 1910 (about 10 percent as compared with 15 percent). But it is twice what it was 30 years ago.

No less important than sheer numbers is the character of the new wave, which is very different from the earlier one. We have seen a large increase in the number of immigrants with few if any skills, and simultaneously a shift in area of origin from Europe and Canada to Latin America (50 percent) and Asia (30 percent). "If nothing else," concludes Borjas, "the Second Great Migration has altered the 'look' of the United States in ways that were unimaginable in the 1970." This change in "look" accounts for much of the popular unease about our current levels of immigration, leading a writer like Peter Brimelow (*Alien Nation*, 1995) to fear that "the American nation might die."

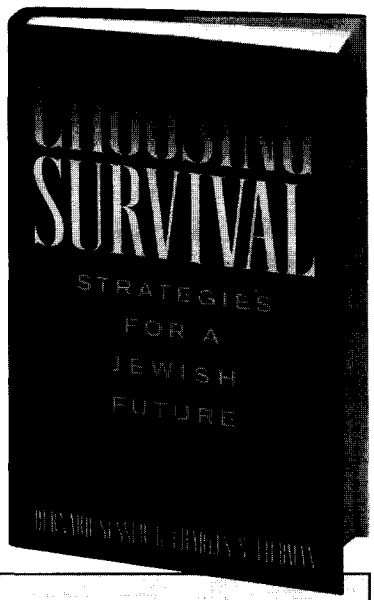
The new immigrants, Borjas finds, have also increased inequality in this country by depressing the economic opportunities of native-born unskilled workers. They have placed substantial fiscal burdens on the welfare systems of the states in which they congregate, and they have benefited employers of unskilled workers. In sum, today's immigration "can be viewed as an income-redistribution program, a large wealth transfer" favoring high- over low-income Americans.

Many of these findings are now uncontested. The National Academy of Sciences Research Council (NRC) estimates that immigration was responsible for 44 percent of the decline in real wages experienced by high-school dropouts between 1980 and 1994. Writing in the *Public Interest* (Fall 1998), Steven Camarota, a scholar at the Center for Immigration Studies, maintained that the wage effects are even "larger than those reported in the NRC study." Both the NRC and Camarota also support Borjas's finding that immigration has negative fiscal consequences, especially for the six states (California, New York, Texas, Florida, New Jersey, and Illinois) that account for three-fourths of the immigrant population.

To make matters worse, recent immigrants themselves have not fared so well in this country. In contrast to their turn-of-the-century predecessors, who gradually caught up to native-born Americans, those entering in 1960 are today much farther behind native-born Americans economically than they were at the time of their arrival. More significantly, the newer immigrants show lower rates of assimilation than did earlier arrivals, and are less likely to learn English, which for Borjas is one key to narrowing the income gap. All in all, he writes, the

central dilemmas facing
American and Israeli Jews....

Readers will be rewarded by Susser and Liebman's incisive views of contemporary realities and future Jewish possibilities."
—Jack Wertheimer,
The Jewish Theological Seminary



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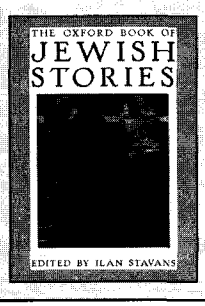

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wages of recent immigrants are unlikely to grow rapidly enough to permit them "ever [to] overcome their economic disadvantage".

As Borjas is quick to acknowledge, the new immigrants' slower rate of assimilation cannot be laid entirely at their own feet. In good part it is traceable to a loss of faith in traditional American values by our dominant liberal class. He tellingly quotes Martha Farnsworth Riche, director of the Bureau of the Census in the Clinton administration:

> Without fully realizing it, we have left the time when the non-white, non-Western part of our population could be expected to assimilate to the dominant majority. In the future, the white Western majority will have to do some assimilation of its own.

Such multiculturalist banalities, it should be noted, happen to coincide neatly with the interests of the principal beneficiaries of today's immigration—the people who hire the pool cleaners and gardeners in Beverly Hills and East Hampton and who insist on having freshly hand-picked vegetables and salads on their dinner table.

AFTER LAYING out and considering the facts, Borjas comes to prescription. Our present policy, established in 1965, admits any visa applicant with a family member already residing in the United States, subject only to so-called "pierceable caps" (bureaucratese for caps that are not really caps). In addition, a limited number of slots are available based on skills; in the early 1990's, however, these accounted for only 7 percent of all visas issued. Finally, some 10,000 visas are available to foreigners who create at least ten jobs by investing at least $1 million or, in an area of high unemployment, $500,000.

Instead of all this, Borjas would give "points" to visa applicants based on various socioeconomic characteristics, skills among them. The total number of immigrants would be determined by where the passing score is set, while the number of points each applicant earns would determine who gets in.

Canada is Borjas's model. There, points toward a visa are given for age—neither too young nor too old; advanced degrees—doctorates preferred; work experience; English-language fluency; number of relatives already in the country; and occupation (economists, alas, get a stingy one out of a possible ten points). Anyone with more than 70 points is in; all others, stay home.

Borjas recognizes that this plan has two major defects. First, the characteristics that matter and the weights assigned to them are left in the hands of bureaucrats. Second, the categories used to determine who shall be welcomed and who turned away—education, age, and occupation—are not certain predictors of economic performance; in the U.S., indeed, they "explain only about a third of the variation in earnings across workers."

Against these defects, however, Borjas sets what is to him the overwhelming virtue of the Canadian point system: it works, by which he means that it "generates a more skilled immigrant flow" than other systems.

PERHAPS THE most interesting aspect of Borjas's discussion here is his exploration and ultimate dismissal of the use of market principles in allocating visas. In a market system, visas would go to those who most value and, in open bidding, could afford them. This, Borjas freely concedes, "would maximize the total gains accruing to those who immigrate to the United States and to the U.S. Treasury." Yet, he goes on, "despite [its] logical appeal and apparent benefits, . . . this type of proposal does not seem to go far in the political debate."

The problem as he sees it is not

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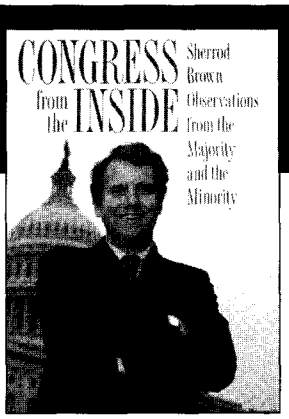

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only that "most of the ancestors of the current American population would have been unable to buy such visas." It is also that reliance on markets for certain things—Borjas includes in this category not just visas but human organs—raises "moral questions":

> Although the sale of kidneys, livers, and visas may be the economist's favorite solution to the very difficult problem of how to allocate these scarce resources in a democratic society, the proposals tend to share a moral blind spot. Many persons—myself included—feel that there are some things that should not be for sale.

I happen to disagree with this line of reasoning, but the point to be stressed is that, in rejecting a market-based approach, Borjas is left with yet another rationing scheme, admittedly different from our present one but leaving open some of the very questions he wants to foreclose: namely, whom should the policy benefit, and why, and how do we decide? Although he attempts to cut through this thicket by taking as his standard the economic well-being of Americans, leaving it to others to propose variations and to policy-makers to weigh the cost of those variations against the "higher cause" the policy is meant to serve, he cannot escape the arbitrariness that, he rightly contends, is one of the besetting sins of the present system.

A similar problem bedevils Borjas's discussion of numbers, i.e., not the "who" of immigration policy but the "how many."

On this point, he is somewhat stumped. After musing about the effect of admitting various numbers, he offers us "a good place to start": 500,000 annually, about half the current level, and in line with the recommendation of the Commission for Immigration Reform.

But why reduce the current flow at all? Because, Borjas writes, the "passion in the immigration debate" indicates that the current numbers are "too large." Here once again he abandons his expertise as an economist to play politics. Just as markets cannot be used to determine which sorts of immigrants we will take in, because "this type of proposal does not seem to go far in the political debate," so they cannot be used to determine the numbers we will take in, because the immigration debate has turned passionate.

But why not? The present system already includes some market components: visas for some skilled workers and those capable of investing $1 million. Nor does Borjas tell us how he *knows* that a concerted effort to push for a market-based visa policy is doomed to fail: after all, no one thought that proposals by economists to deregulate the airlines, and trucking, and the electric and gas industries would "go far in the political debate," yet today those industries rely on market mechanisms to allocate their products among the various claimants.

Having rejected the market and any sort of bidding system for visas, Borjas is left standing on shaky ground. He must play pick-a-number to determine how many immigrants we will take in, and he must empower government bureaucrats—presumably those in the notoriously corrupt and incompetent Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS)—to determine who they will be. And nowhere in all this is it explained how the system he proposes is better suited than a market system to admit immigrants who will add to the welfare of native Americans.

Consider the case of two applicants, one a computer engineer whose skills are in short supply in Silicon Valley, the other a social worker. Any market-based test, depending as it does on the ability to pay, will give preference to the former as someone who has already established his value in the international labor market or can demon-

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strate his prospective value to an employer willing to fund his entrance fee. (This is not just true for computer specialists; hotel owners in Florida who are already scrambling to pay substantial moving costs for domestic workers would certainly be willing to bear the entrance fees of prospective workers from abroad.) But the social worker will undoubtedly be the choice of an INS bureaucrat, who himself has probably fled the market for the safety of life tenure in government. I leave it to the reader to guess which of the two applicants is likelier to increase the economic well-being of Americans.

As THOMAS SOWELL has written, "The peopling of America is one of the great dramas in all of human history." This country, the anti-immigration sentiment of our own and earlier ages notwithstanding, has always been nourished by being the one place in the world that has truly been "Heaven's Door." Somehow—and no one is certain just how—we have always managed to convert the unskilled and the impoverished into skilled and economically productive members of the American family.

Borjas proves beyond a doubt that such a feat will be far more difficult with the current wave of immigrants than it was with those who came here in earlier times, and from other places. But difficult is not the same thing as impossible. So we must ask ourselves this question: are we now prepared to turn away a new generation of those who would come here to work and advance, when we can instead rely on the market to weed out those among them who seek merely a handout, when we can reestablish assimilation as a legitimate goal of policy, and when we can use the tax system to ameliorate the distributional consequences that quite properly trouble Borjas and others?

Would that Borjas had turned his fine academic mind and writing hand to the development of policies that would render hard restrictions on immigration unnecessary. But that may be asking too much of an author who has already given us the facts and many of the tools we need to engage in rational discourse about the future both of immigration and, inevitably, of our society.

Group Memory

The Holocaust in American Life
by Peter Novick
Houghton Mifflin. 384 pp. $27.00

Reviewed by
David G. Roskies

MUST EVERY major city in the United States boast its own museum of the Holocaust? Must every high school offer a mandatory curriculum on the destruction of European Jewry, every college campus have an endowed chair of Holocaust studies? Should a so-called Week of Remembrance in mid-April be observed, as Martin Luther King Day is now observed in mid-January? How many movies and books are enough?

To Peter Novick, the point of saturation has already been reached. A professor of history at the University of Chicago, Novick has set out to write the story of Holocaust consciousness in America, beginning in the war years and ending with a glimpse at the future. And the first thing he reminds us is that the Holocaust did not always occupy such a prominent place in our urban landscape, on college campuses, in our civil religion, in cinemas and bookstores, or on the op-ed page of the *New York Times*. Even to think about World War II in terms of the fate of the Jews, as we tend to do now, is, he admonishes, to impose present preoccupations onto a very different past.

Defending certain elements of that past, and decrying the Holocaust-obsessed present, is the burden of this book. In his opening chapters, Novick returns us to an era when a public emphasis on ethnicity was viewed, not least by American Jews themselves, as politically counterproductive and perhaps intrinsically suspect. And with reason: although, nowadays, it is commonplace to hear that American Jews did not do nearly enough to help their co-religionists during the war, Novick argues otherwise. Basing himself on the minutes and internal memoranda of the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, the Jewish Labor Committee, and the National Community Relations Advisory Council, he concludes that organized Jewry acted vigorously and responsibly in light of the actual political landscape at home and, especially, the intractable conditions abroad.

Similarly in the immediate postwar period, when the Jewish community rallied behind Washington to confront the new threat of Soviet totalitarianism. Under the impact of the cold war, Novick writes, American Jewish discourse about the Holocaust was necessarily "either muted or turned to anti-Soviet purposes." As for Holocaust survivors who had made their way here, to the extent they were talked about at all they were upheld not as figures of martyrdom but as model citizens who were taking full advantage of the American dream.

It was during the 1960's and 70's, the period Novick calls "The Years of Transition," that things changed. The catalysts were two events that occurred halfway around the globe, in the state of Israel. The first was the trial of Adolf Eichmann, which etched the details of the German

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killing machine into the collective Jewish psyche. The second was the Six-Day war of 1967, when American Jews relived the trauma of mass annihilation in the belief (false, according to Novick) that the Israeli army was in imminent danger of defeat.

What resulted from these two events was an American Jewish fixation with the horrors of the Holocaust that would mark—or, in Novick's view, disfigure—the decades to come, legitimating a whole new orientation to communal affairs. At the extreme, he writes, fears based on the Holocaust impelled Jewish organizations more or less to invent a surge in domestic anti-Semitism, with the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith being "especially assiduous in giving wide circulation to anti-Semitic remarks by obscure black hustlers and demagogues." Similarly inflated notions of Jewish insecurity lay behind the hysterical campaigns to rally support for Israel and Soviet Jewry ("Never Again!"), and to warn against the dangers of assimilation.

And this, says Novick, is where we still are today. American Jews who themselves have abandoned any but the most rudimentary religious practices, and are as fuzzy in their grasp of history as their fellow non-Jewish Americans, have created an entire surrogate religion around the Holocaust, complete with saints (survivors), scripture (*Schindler's List*), and shrines (those ubiquitous museums). A community more secure, and more affluent, than Jews have ever been in all of history has given itself over to an utterly irrational scenario of destruction and victimization, in disregard of political reality and to the detriment of its own best interests and values.

As this brief summary suggests, Israel and Zionism are the combined *bête noire* of Novick's account of the career of the Holocaust in American consciousness. The sea change that occurred between the 1940's, when the murder of European Jewry still lacked a name, and the 1970's, when the whole world began to suffer from Holocaust-envy, was, in his view, the work of the Zionist lobby. Even the word "Holocaust," he contends, did not gain currency in America until it was imported from Israel during the Eichmann trial. Likewise, the campaign to vilify Hannah Arendt for her 1963 book, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*—a book whose thesis "that the typical Holocaust perpetrator was 'terrifyingly normal' and by no means a driven anti-Semite" is, Novick airily asserts, now accepted by "almost all scholars"—was launched from Israel. After the Six-Day war, American Jewish organizations routinely took their marching orders from Israel, sometimes literally so: the annual March of the Living, a worldwide effort to rescue Jewish teenagers from assimilation by leading them on a pilgrimage to the Nazi death camps and then to Israel, is a transparent Zionist product. And so forth. Novick even blames the Zionists for doing away with the last vestiges of authentic Jewish American speech patterns, replacing the beloved *yarmulke* with *kippa* and the homey *shabbes* with the harsh-sounding *shabbat*.

All the main villains in Novick's story are either "Zionists" or "neoconservatives," or both. The late Lucy S. Dawidowicz, for example, the formidable historian of the Holocaust, appears here only as a neoconservative "expert on Communism." Novick has mined archival sources for every letter-to-the-editor Dawidowicz ever wrote, every internal memorandum she ever prepared for a Jewish organization; yet nowhere does he so much as mention her classic 1975 book, *The War Against the Jews, 1933-1945*, a work whose sobriety, rigor, and

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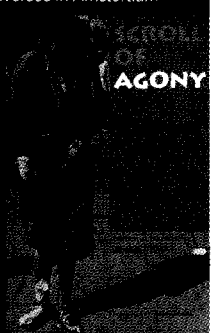

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uncompromising argumentation set a gold standard for the then-infant field of Holocaust studies.

In short, the real subject of Novick's book is not the Holocaust at all but rather the politics of memory. This, however, is an area in which his own credentials rather severely qualify his competence to pass judgment. As a resolutely secular Jew, with, apparently, little if any command of traditional sources, Novick demonstrates no feel whatsoever for the processes of covenantal memory whereby Jews have always apprehended historical events under such constituent rubrics as exile, martyrdom, redemption. If, for example, during the Yom Kippur war of 1973, Jews the world over instinctively "remembered" the Holocaust, Novick assumes that Zionist propaganda was somehow to blame. That the Egyptians themselves chose the holiest day in the Jewish calendar to launch their near-fatal attack on the Jewish state does not even enter into his historical equation. They remembered, but he does not.

As a stranger to the inner life of the Jews, Novick also demonstrates no feel for their habitual patterns of collective behavior. Discussing the postwar displaced-persons (DP) camps, for example, he documents the efforts of Zionist chaplains and emissaries from the Jewish Agency to influence refugees to emigrate to Palestine, castigating these officials for manipulating the naive sensibilities of the traumatized and helpless refugees. What he does not know or does not acknowledge is that the majority of Jews who survived the war had in fact been members of one or another highly politicized prewar youth movement, and that the second thing they organized in the DP camps, after a quorum to recite *kaddish*, was political parties. If some proportion ended up going to Palestine, it was not out of naiveté but out of informed conviction.

But this particular set of convictions is not much to Novick's liking. Nor does he like it any better in its present-day manifestation, when it takes the form of a Holocaust-inspired preoccupation with Jewish self-interest. As a Left-liberal, he complains that this overmindfulness of their own sorrows commits Jews to nothing positive as Americans. Worse, by "raising the threshold of outrage," the emphasis on remembering the Holocaust has desensitized Jews to their moral obligation toward those less fortunate than themselves. In an outburst of passion, he asks why the American Jewish community does not labor to rescue the millions upon millions of innocent children who are dying of starvation today. This, of course, is the purest cant—and, as a glance at the agenda of any major Jewish organization would confirm, a wild distortion of the truth to boot.

DESPITE THE multiple deformations under which Novick labors, has he nevertheless stumbled onto an important point? Is there not something deeply troubling about an American Jewish community that has been spending exponentially more money erecting monuments to the dead than to educating its young, or about the proliferation of Holocaust courses that teach about the Jews only as a community marked for destruction, and then often in the context of a competition for victim status in today's multicultural America? There is, indeed. Nor has Novick been the only one to be troubled by this state of affairs.

But in this respect *The Holocaust in American Life* may in fact be a symptom of a subtle, and still largely unarticulated, shift in mood. What, after all, explains the huge success of the Oscar-winning escapist fantasy, *Life Is Beautiful*? Although the Italian comic Roberto Benigni may seem to make a strange bedfellow with the dour professor Peter Novick, each in his own way is urging us to bring closure, as it were, to the Holocaust, the one by means of zany antics and the mindless message that love and laughter will save a child from the hangman, the other by demystifying Jewish memory itself as nothing but a tool of Zionist politics.

Novick is also not wholly wrong in focusing on the pivotal role played by Zionism in the resurgence of Jewish collective memory in our day, though he is blind to the reciprocal nature of the dynamic. Jewish political sovereignty itself would never have been achieved in the land of Israel had it not been for Zionism's ability to appeal to such ancient and ineradicable Jewish archetypes as the ingathering of the exiles, Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones, and the tradition of *kiddush haShem*, the sanctification of God's Name through martyrdom. Nor would the campaign to free Soviet Jewry have succeeded in mobilizing the energies of hundreds of thousands of American Jewish youngsters without the powerful reverberations of the biblical injunction, "Let My People Go!," a more com-

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pelling slogan by far, incidentally, than "Never Again!" The airlift of Ethiopian Jews to Israel is similarly unimaginable in the absence of the sanction implied by the very name of "Operation Exodus."

It stands perfectly to reason, in other words, that American Jewish organizations should have drawn upon Israel and Zionism in their own efforts to forge a sense of a shared Jewish past, present, and future. The use—and, yes, the abuse—of Holocaust memory forms part of a much larger mobilization of group memory for the sake of group survival. But what this means is that, as the power of the Zionist appeal wanes—and it is demonstrably waning—so, too, will the power of the Holocaust.

And then where will American Jews be? If they follow the instruction of Peter Novick, they will be good Americans—of his stripe—and they will be even more bereft of their own history and memory than they already are.

Blast from the Past

The Whole Woman
by Germaine Greer
Knopf. 384 pp. $25.00

Reviewed by
Samuel McCracken

THREE DECADES ago, the English writer Germaine Greer erupted into the world with *The Female Eunuch*, a cleverly titled book whose core argument, as she recently summarized it, was that "every girl child is conceived as a whole woman but from the time of her birth to her death she is progressively disabled." As summary, that is accurate enough, but it fails to capture the qualities in the book that provoked such a remarkable mixture of admiration and outrage when it was published. The radical, erudite, witty Greer was then, as she is now, a *sui-generis* feminist—*mutatis mutandis*, a kind of Camille Paglia of the 70's.

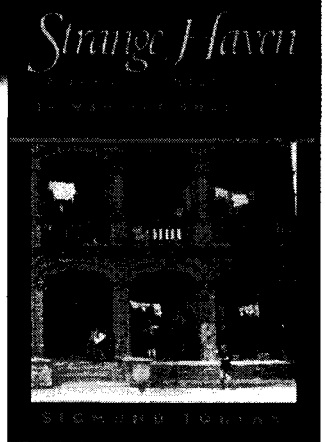
Greer has been reasonably prolific over the past 30 years, but other authors have come along to shock while she has gradually acquired the patina of an object surviving more or less unaltered from a previous age. This clearly could not be allowed to continue. Although she explicitly forswore any sequel to her first book—on the grounds that, when the time came, a younger woman would have to write it—now, like a congressional supporter of term limits discovering the virtues of experience, she has decided that "it's time to get angry again." And so *The Whole Woman*—a title that invites confusion with Marabel Morgan's antithetical *The Total Woman* (Morgan advises doting on one's husband 24 hours a day)—picks up where *The Female Eunuch* left off.

The reason for Greer's current anger is, in a nutshell, that feminism has not worked out the way it was intended. Women have attained legal equality, but they have not attained liberation. Instead, men have been the primary beneficiaries of the sexual revolution. If this suggests a possible change of mind on Greer's part—perhaps feminism *misread* what women need, or want?—nothing could be farther from the case: "The old enemies, undefeated, have devised new strategies, new assailants lie in ambush," she writes, meaning, by enemies, men and the social arrangements they have invented. "We have no choice but to turn and fight."

There follows a series of tractates organized under the rubrics of Body, Mind, Love, and Power and

SAMUEL MCCRACKEN *is assistant to the chancellor of Boston University.*

REFUGE



STRANGE HAVEN
A Jewish Childhood in Wartime Shanghai
SIGMUND TOBIAS
Foreword by Michael Berenbaum

"The history in this memoir is astonishing. Driven from Germany by the Nazis, Tobias was six years old in 1938 when he and his family found refuge with 17,000 other European Jews in a part of Shanghai under Japanese occupation. His quiet personal recollection describes how they got there and what their daily life was like. . . . An affecting memoir of rescue and survival." — *Booklist*

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adding up to a catalogue of how women have either failed to become better off or have actually become worse off since the 1960's. Wherever Greer looks, she finds evidence—whether it exists or not.

Sometimes the problem as she sees it is simply the continuation of an old evil, like women's male-imposed obsession with their own bodies, a/k/a "beauty." But sometimes the problem is the new rights that women have fought for and now *think* they enjoy, like the right to be soldiers, which turns out to be only the right to one long course of abuse by men (except, Greer is quick to add, in guerrilla armies, which provide women with the requisite political "education" to understand why armed struggle is necessary). And sometimes it is technology—that is, male technology.

In-vitro fertilization, for example, is a process leading to "man-made mothers." Mammography is particularly perverse, in Britain because it is free only to women over the age of fifty, elsewhere because it is painful, especially for younger women. Abortion, too, exemplifies the exploitation of woman by man; pregnancy, after all, occurs because of inadequate contraception, and what is that but a consequence of the male demand for, as Greer puts it, access to the cervix during intercourse?

The subject of bodily mutilation gets an entire chapter, one that finely illustrates Greer's attitude toward sex in general and toward her own, female sex in particular. There are, it emerges, two kinds of mutilation. The *bad* kind comprises caesarean sections, hysterectomies, and episiotomies; the good, believe it or not, includes genital piercing and the clitoridectomies widely performed on infants and young girls in Africa. Both, to Greer, are examples of women asserting control over their own bodies—female technology, in other words—whereas efforts to end clitoridectomy, whether led by men or by their female patsies, are simply one more subcategory of the male will to dominate.

And speaking of the will to dominate, what about shopping? First the male-run corporations show their enmity toward women by making available in supermarkets the raw foodstuffs historically provided by women themselves. Next comes the insult of processed and frozen foods. And now you can buy ready-to-serve meals prepared in in-store kitchens. The final infamy is that women still must do all the shopping themselves—this last being one of the myriad pristine assertions in *The Whole Woman* that appear never to have been sullied by simple empirical testing.

A FAIR amount of ink has been spilled by earnest reviewers taking issue with the arguments, so-called, of this book; the *New Republic* devoted almost 7,000 words to a solemn rebuttal. But what is there, really, to say? The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* wrote better than it knew in describing Germaine Greer in a recent edition as an "Australian-born English writer and feminist who championed the sexual freedom of women." Assuming the statement was ever true, the past tense says it all.

Shallow Throat

Shadow:
Five Presidents and the
Legacy of Watergate
by Bob Woodward
Simon & Schuster. 592 pp. $27.50

Reviewed by
James Nuechterlein

IN THE beginning was *All the President's Men* (1974). It would be difficult to overestimate the impact of that monumentally best-selling account of the role played by the *Washington Post* in uncovering the Watergate conspiracy. The book helped reinvent journalism: no longer were reporters mere conduits for the news, they were investigative journalists, and their main job was to ferret out the truths hidden behind the lies and obfuscations that, it was henceforth widely assumed, were the *lingua franca* of the political establishment. The cynical populism fed by the new journalism was not itself new, but its flowering in the post-Watergate era injected a pervasively sour note into American political culture.

Meanwhile, the authors of *All the President's Men*, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein—dashingly portrayed by Robert Redford and Dustin Hoffman in the popular movie made from the book—became journalistic superstars overnight, and their careers moved from strength to strength. Woodward has since been the author or co-author of an extended string of number-one best-sellers, including *The Final Days* (1976), *The Brethren* (1979), *Veil* (1987), *The Commanders* (1991), and *The Agenda* (1994). None of these books, however, exhibited much of the anti-establishment, neomuckraking spirit of their illustrious predecessor. They were, for the most part, highly respectful accounts of serious and important people dealing with serious and important events. They dug behind the scenes but not under rocks, and increasingly their success depended not on the scandals they unearthed but on the access to the high and mighty their author—now himself securely part of the establishment—had managed to obtain.

Now, 25 years after the publication of *All the President's Men*, Woodward returns to where he started. In *Shadow: Five Presidents and the Legacy of Watergate*, he examines the lingering effects of the original scandal on the men who succeeded Richard Nixon in the White House, all of whom found

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themselves dogged by stringent ethics laws, a newly assertive Congress, and a media determined to suspect the worst of their every action. It is hardly surprising that the story that emerges is a dispiriting one. What is surprising is that a book heavily based on personal accounts of dramatic events should be so lifeless and dull.

In his opening section, on Gerald Ford, Woodward focuses on whether the then-Vice President did or did not guarantee a pardon to Richard Nixon prior to the latter's resignation from office. On this matter as on others, Woodward avoids summary judgments, but he leaves the impression that, while making no explicit deal, Ford did manage to convey to Nixon that he would not leave him to the mercy of prosecutors and courts.

In his treatment of Jimmy Carter, Woodward emphasizes the investigations into charges of financial impropriety against the President's budget director, Bert Lance, and of drug use against his chief of staff, Hamilton Jordan. Neither inquiry uncovered illegal behavior, although Lance was forced to resign by the scandal. Carter is clearly the least favorite of Woodward's subjects, and the picture that emerges of him in these pages—remote, cold, self-righteous—is one we have seen before.

The great Watergate-style drama of the Reagan administration arose, of course, over the Iran-*contra* affair. This is a more than twice-told tale, and those acquainted with what has already been written about it will find little new here. Was Reagan aware of the diversion of funds from arms sales in Iran to aid the anti-Sandinista rebels in Nicaragua? Reagan himself always insisted that he was not, and the protracted investigation by independent counsel Lawrence Walsh—an inquiry at once meandering and obsessive—came up with no hard evidence to the contrary. Woodward's interviews with White House insiders only further support Reagan's version.

Still, if Walsh could not "get" Reagan, he managed to cloud the presidency of Reagan's successor George Bush by persistent attempts to implicate him and many of his associates in Iran-*contra*. The culture of scandal, Woodward makes clear, wore Bush down as he veered between outrage and depression over the series of accusations against people close to him: his nominee for secretary of defense, John Tower; his Supreme Court nominees David Souter and (especially) Clarence Thomas; and his son Neil, who was caught up in the savings-and-loan debacle of those years. Declining to be interviewed by Woodward for this book, Bush sent him instead a pointed letter:

> Watergate was your watershed. For you it was an earthshaking event that made you. . . . I think Watergate and the Vietnam war are the two things that moved Beltway journalism into this aggressive, intrusive, "take no prisoners" kind of reporting that I can now say I find offensive. . . . The new young cynical breed wants to emulate you. But many of them [in order] to do that question the word and the integrity of all in politics.

Inevitably, Woodward devotes over half of this book to the part of the story we know best of all: the Clinton imbroglio. None of the major figures in the Clinton scandal emerges from his account in heroic outline. Worst of all, of course, is the President himself, a man of extraordinary gifts but with a gaping hole where his character ought to be. In the Lewinsky affair, Clinton acted shoddily and then lied—insistently, repeatedly, adamantly—to everyone: his family, his friends, his associates, court officials, the public, his lawyers ("I'm retired," he as-

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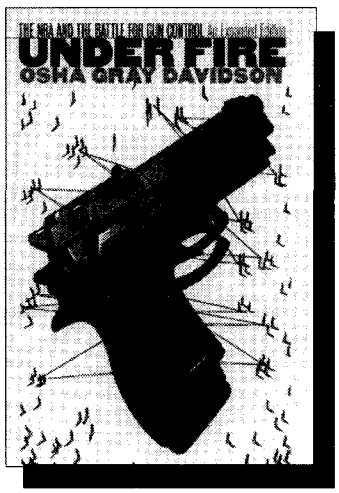

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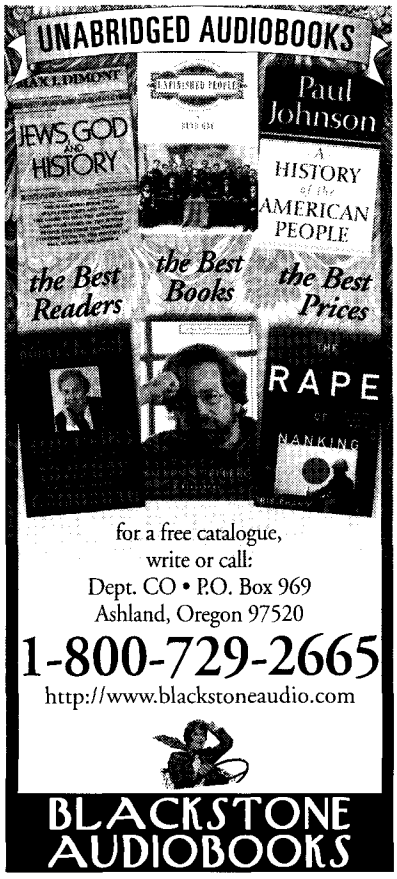
sured Robert Bennett when pressed about rumors concerning his womanizing). He was no more to be trusted on small matters than on large: Woodward's sources confirm earlier reports that Clinton cheats at golf.

If the President is in a class by himself, the scandal, in Woodward's telling, brought out the best in no one. Hillary Rodham Clinton alternated between despairing self-pity ("How can I go on?") and angry imaginings of a "vast right-wing conspiracy" out to do her husband in. Kenneth Starr comes across as earnest and high-minded, but also as self-righteous and overly zealous. The President's lawyers, as presented here, were a mixed bag, but to one degree or another every one of them willed himself into attack-dog mode in defense of a man whose behavior was indefensible.



As THIS summary suggests, most of the material in *Shadow* is painfully familiar. We have heard virtually all the stories-within-the-story before, and while Woodward fills in endless details, he does not add much that is substantively new. Where his earlier books were studded with often astonishing revelations, here, despite his hundreds of interviews, he has come up with little more than a series of gossipy footnotes to history.

Shadow is no less disappointing when it comes to Woodward's attempts at summing up. He has always been primarily a storyteller, not an analyst, and this book is no exception. Still, the meager analysis it does provide is murky, even peculiar. In brief, Woodward argues that the reason post-Watergate Presidents became caught up in scandals is that

> they did not fully comprehend the depth of distrust left by Nixon. . . . The habit of deception and hedging practiced by Presidents would no longer be acceptable. . . . These Presidents were inhabiting a new world, but they often seemed not to recognize it.

This will hardly do. Each of these Presidents understood perfectly well the "new world" he inhabited, as is clearly indicated by Woodward's own depictions of their angry and frustrated reactions to the pervasive climate of scandal in which they were enveloped. Clinton aside, they got into trouble not so much, or at least not only, because of what they did, but because a culture of mistrust, created in large part by newsmen like Bob Woodward, made even their innocent actions appear sinister. Beyond that, it is nothing short of bizarre to suggest, as Woodward seems to do, that any President could, if he so desired, conduct his office in perfect political transparency.

In the end, we are left with a series of mostly unoriginal stories recounted in pedestrian fashion with an obtuse and self-serving moral attached. Perhaps Woodward's editors should have been more mindful of the classic injunction, "Stop me if you've heard this one before." On the other hand, maybe they knew better: once again he has produced a number-one best-seller.

Evil & Beyond

Cries Unheard— Why Children Kill: The Story of Mary Bell

by Gitta Sereny

Metropolitan. 401 pp. $26.00

Reviewed by
Kay S. Hymowitz

IN 1968, a juvenile from a poor section of the decaying English industrial town of Newcastle-on-Tyne murdered two neighborhood children in separate incidents nine weeks apart. The case differed strikingly from the rash of juvenile murders that has erupted with such fury here, most recently in Littleton, Colorado.

For one thing, the killer was no glandular teenager out for revenge against cruel peers or a jilting lover; she was a clever and pretty eleven-year-old girl, and her two male victims were, shockingly, three and four years old. Nor had Mary Bell gone to violent movies like *The Basketball Diaries* or played video games like *Doom*; instead, she watched the 1950's-style Westerns popular on English television at the time, entertainment we associate with a safer and more innocent age.

Mary Bell's crime was different in other respects, too. She did not use

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a gun like today's child-murderers, whether from the affluent suburbs or the streets of the inner city; rather, she strangled the two little boys, and drew her initials on the belly of one of them, with her bare hands. Nor was Mary an alienated loner. Though her family was deeply troubled and her neighborhood poor, she was well-integrated into a community where children played in the streets and wandered in to purchase french fries and lollipops from local shopkeepers who would scold them if their hands were dirty or they said a bad word.

Gitta Sereny, an English journalist who covered Mary Bell's 1968 trial 30 years ago and has written a previous book about the case, has now returned to the crime with *Cries Unheard—Why Children Kill.* Sereny has long devoted herself to the subject of evil, seeking to explore its mysteries in earlier studies of Frantz Stangl, the commandant of Treblinka, and Albert Speer, Hitler's minister of armaments, both of whom she came to know intimately through intensive, probing interviews.

In her new book, Sereny appears to be working in the same mode. She spent five months talking with Mary Bell, who was released from prison in 1980 after serving eleven and a half years of a mandatory life sentence for manslaughter and is now a woman in her forties with a child of her own. Sereny's object was to revisit two interrelated and important, not to mention timely, questions: why do children kill, and what is society's appropriate response when they do?

Though Mary Bell's crime does not resemble our recent high-profile cases, it does fit in handily with mainstream explanations of the causes of child violence: specifically, underclass dysfunction and sexual abuse. Mary Bell came from a poor family in a city with the highest crime rate, the highest incidence of alcoholism, and close to the highest unemployment in Britain. Her mother was a prostitute specializing in domination, a cruelly narcissistic woman incapable of much feeling for the daughter she bore when she was seventeen. "Take the thing away from me," she screamed upon being shown her newborn baby; indeed, it might have been best if that had happened.

On four different occasions during her early years, Mary "accidentally" ingested dangerous medications. At around the age of four, she was forced to act as her mother's professional sex toy as she was held down, sometimes blindfolded, and sodomized anally and orally. By the time of the murders, Mary was no longer subject to such torture, but she slept covered only by rags and without sheets or blankets on a sagging mattress that held the urine—for she was a persistent bed-wetter—into which her mother would rub her face.

As in a mystery story, Sereny reveals the horrific extent of Mary's abuse only in the last chapters of this book. But it is what informs her guiding thesis throughout: namely, that children commit violence only when, as a result of severe trauma, their "long pent-up anger and suppressed emotions" can no longer be contained. In Sereny's view, it is unjust to subject such children to trial and punishment, or even to think of their crimes in terms of evil; they are less actors than acted upon.

Unfortunately, Mary's fate was otherwise. In their singleminded concern with determining her guilt or innocence, the authorities made no attempt to discover the truth about Mary's horrendous home life. As a result, a child who needed the help of trained psychiatrists was instead put on trial before a jury "neither qualified nor required to deal with the pathology of disturbed children," was found guilty, and was punished. For Sereny, the outrage is that the very thing most relevant to this case—namely, Mary's past—was ignored, while the "almost ir-

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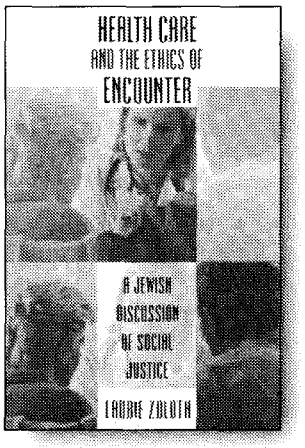

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relevant" facts of the two murders were elevated to center stage

THE INDICTMENT Sereny levels here is forceful but hardly novel. Interpreting misbehavior by reference to childhood sexual abuse is by now a soap-opera trope, and psychiatry, to which Sereny is passionately devoted, has long since been the partner of the juvenile-justice system. Still, she has written a fascinating book whose novelistic details keep bursting out of the neat frame into which she has vainly attempted to stuff them. Ironically, the story she tells ends up dramatizing the limitations of her own therapeutic worldview.

What is most compelling in *Cries Unheard* is the tale of how a morally conscious adult emerged from a half-conscious, damaged girl. Like the Littleton killers imagining that, on completing their high-school massacre, they would hijack an airplane and crash it into the Empire State Building, the young Mary lived in a dream world of cops and robbers in which she was on the lam, "living with horses in the wilds of Scotland." Lost in her grandiose reveries, she could not comprehend fully the finality of death. Four days after one of her murders, she arrived on the doorstep of the victim's family and grinningly asked to see the little boy in his coffin, to make sure he was really dead. It was as if other people were play figures in her mind, and death a mere plot device.

Nor did moral consciousness arrive with adolescence. Even at sixteen, upon learning she was to be transferred to a prison from the exemplary reform school where she had spent the previous five years, she asked: "Why? What have I done?" But her native intelligence was stirring—and, with it, an inchoate moral sense. After another six years in prison, where she made the first close friendships of her life, Mary gradually came to share society's view of the "absolute enormity" of her crime and to feel the reality of other lives.

"Basically it has hardened me," she wrote in 1976 about her stint in prison, "and at the same [time] softened me. I feel . . . softer because maybe I have an insight into how others feel . . . getting involved with some people makes one softer." This ability to accept the actuality of others—and to grasp the anguish the loss of them would bring—climaxed when she gave birth to her own child. Today, though she remains moody and chaotic, she is, according to Sereny, a devoted mother and at least a functional citizen who ponders daily the pain she has caused the families of her two victims.

IN ENGLAND the age of criminal responsibility is ten; here, it varies from state to state, though some have proposed setting it as low as ten. *Cries Unheard* successfully provokes serious questions about this. Eleven-year-old Mary Bell was hardly a deliberative individual, and giving her an adult sentence, whether of life in prison or even twenty years, utterly fails to take that fact into account. Nor can we pretend that a jury trial is a useful means of fostering a child's moral reckoning. Though highly intelligent, Mary understood little of what was happening to her; she did not know what a jury or a verdict was, or the meaning of rules of evidence. No one tried to explain to her the alien language and rituals of a trial or, for that matter, the seriousness of what she had done.

Still, the argument against subjecting children to adult-style justice would be more convincing if Sereny herself showed any understanding of the broader social purposes of criminal proceedings. As her only concern is the personal development of the child, which she is convinced can come about successfully with the help of psychiatrists, she utterly ignores the outrage to

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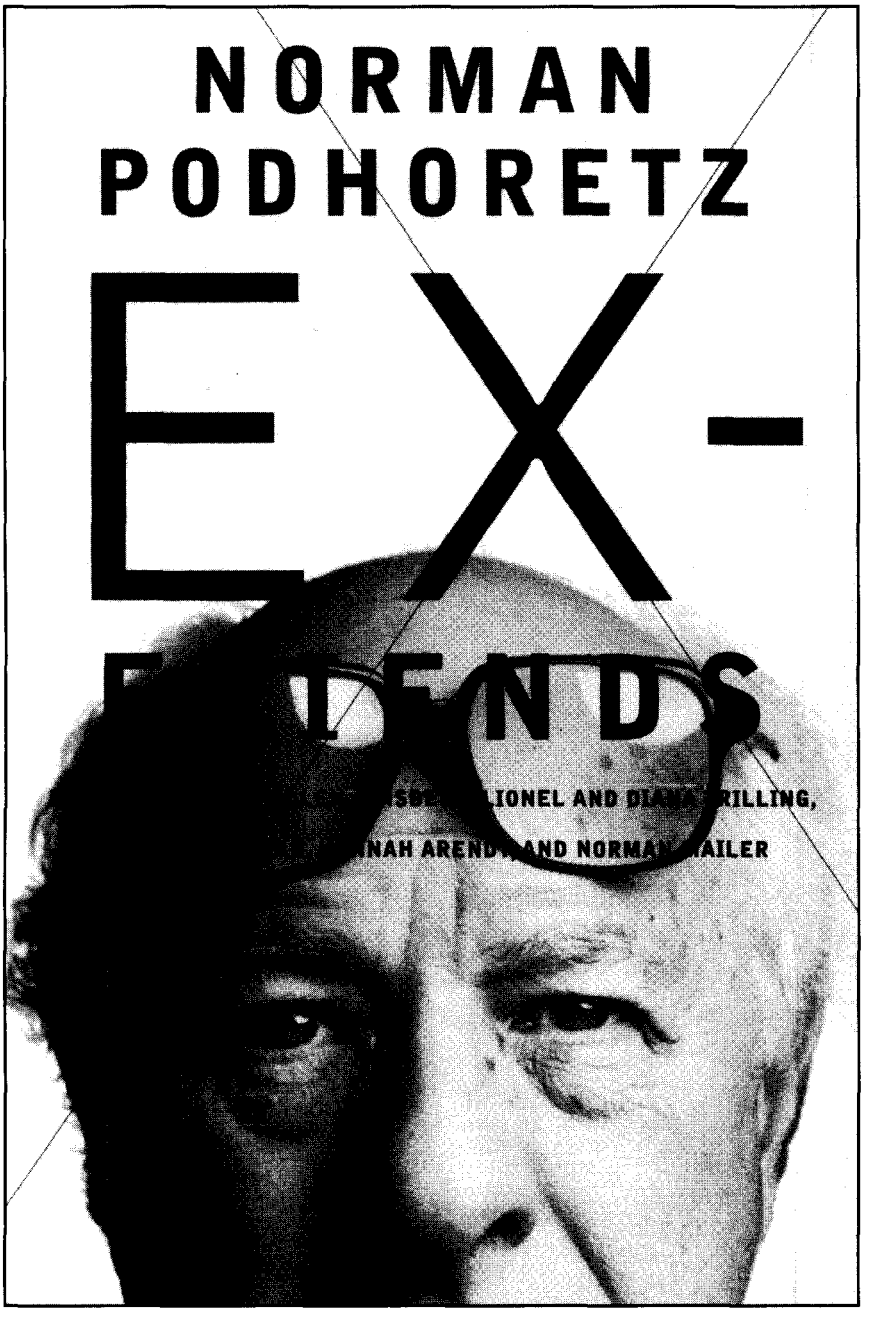

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moral order that murder represents, and the need of any society to address that outrage.

Further undermining Sereny's argument is her own problematic engagement with her subject. In her previous books on Stangl and Speer, she came close to giving herself a starring role in a kind of psychological melodrama. She was the confessor, in whose intelligent and sympathetic presence an evil man could finally relieve his conscience and accept personal responsibility. So, too, in *Cries Unheard*, her interviews, she hints, played a vital role in Mary's healing. Repeatedly, Sereny's own finely honed compassion intrudes into the narrative. When she first sees Mary, she embraces her—"an impulsive gesture, not at all because it was expected or even appropriate but because I suddenly felt like it"—much as, years earlier, she had brought soup to Frantz Stangl, a monster who presided over the deaths of hundreds of thousands, because the two of them had become friends.

WHATEVER ELSE one might say about Sereny's predilection for assuming the role of redeemer, it does tend to cast a shadow of doubt over certain of her facts. Thus, although there is good evidence that Mary's mother behaved monstrously and even murderously toward her young daughter, ultimately we have nothing more than Sereny's own over-involved—and biased—interviews with the grown Mary Bell, who incidentally was paid for her cooperation in doing this book, to prove the specific charge of sexual abuse.

More importantly, however, Sereny's self-dramatization prevents her from confronting another fact, even though it stares her in the face: without benefit of effective psychiatric treatment, Mary Bell still became, in Sereny's own words, a "morally aware adult." The juvenile-justice system Sereny sets out to criticize may have bungled in important respects, but it was more humane—and more edifying—than she can bring herself to admit.

Mary was convicted not of murder but of the lesser charge of manslaughter precisely because it was understood that a child cannot have adult-like moral understanding. She was placed in a civilized and well-appointed reform school, under the direction of a highly gifted educator. Even prison, for all its degradations, helped teach her to share society's horror at her crime. And though given the life sentence required by law, she was released when she was only twenty-three, young enough to pursue a normal life. In about as happy an ending as could be expected under the circumstances, a severely violated, disturbed, and cruel child emerged a morally aware citizen and a loving mother. Evidently there are more paths to decent humanity than can be dreamt of in Gitta Sereny's philosophy.

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